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Wendy Yoder

Southwestern Oklahoma State University, wendy.yoder@swosu.edu

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Student Perceptions of How Faculty Advising Supports the Academic Persistence of
Students of Color at One Predominantly White Institution

by

Wendy Yoder, BA, MEd

A Dissertation

In

Higher Education Administration

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Approved

Dr. Stephanie J. Jones
Chair of Committee

Dr. Ruth Boyd
Committee Member

Dr. Dave Louis
Committee Member

Dr. Mark Sheridan
Dean of the Graduate School

May, 2019

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DEDICATION

For my children, who will always be my two greatest accomplishments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral journey has been challenging and fulfilling, deeply personal and truly communal. I would like to acknowledge the amazing group of students with whom I began this journey. You are the only people who could fully understand the academic trials and victories that I have experienced in the last few years. Thank you for your support and camaraderie. I would also like to thank all of my instructors along the way, but especially Dr. Stephanie Jones for her guidance throughout this process. I appreciate the leadership of my Dissertation Committee, but particularly the ongoing feedback of Dr. Jones as my committee Chair. Thank you to my family and friends for the support and encouragement you have showered on me with every step. Mom, thank you for your unwavering faith in my abilities. Thank you to my husband for picking up the slack at home when my focus was elsewhere. I appreciate you and the sacrifices you have made to help me fulfill this lifelong dream. You inspire me with your work ethic and dedication. Above all, I am grateful for the deepening of my faith that this program has afforded me. Although I expected to be personally challenged by this undertaking, I found that the most significant growth I experienced occurred when I surrendered my shortcomings to Him. I hope that this work, and any of my future research, will be helpful to others.

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ABSTRACT

Racial disparity exists in the rates of persistence and degree attainment within American higher education. Some racial minority groups experience high rates of college attrition, resulting in lower lifetime wages and higher rates of both unemployment and incarceration than people who earn a bachelor degree. Although many studies have researched the causes of minority student attrition, less is known about factors leading to the academic success of students of color. Academic advising is well-defined in the literature as related to student satisfaction and retention.

The following qualitative study used Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework to investigate the perceptions of students of color who have persisted at one public, regional university. The purpose of the study was to explore how students of color perceive and experience faculty academic advising at the predominantly White study institution. Of specific interest was how advisors' actions supported or hindered these students' persistence at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), as well as what students of color recommend as best practices for supporting their academic persistence.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, university documents, field notes, reflexive journaling, and the lens of the researcher. The information was then analyzed using the constant comparative method followed by open and axial coding to identify themes in the data. Research question one explored how students of color perceived faculty academic advising affected their persistence at the predominantly White study institution. Analysis of the data collected to address this research question produced the following four themes: (1) advisor effects on student persistence may be limited, (2) there are differences between an assigned advisor and a campus mentor, (3)

reluctance to disclose personal information to an advisor, and (4) a reliance on self.

Research question two explored which interactions with faculty advisors at the PWI students perceived to be supportive of or hindering to their persistence. Themes that emerged in the data were: (1) poor advising experiences may lead to major changes, and (2) desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable. Research question three investigated what students would recommend for supporting students of color at a PWI. The recommendations that emerged from the data include: (1) faculty advisors need to build relationships with their advisees outside of classes, (2) students should take at least one course with their advisor, (3) institutions should promote cultural events and student organizations, and (4) students of color need to be pragmatic when selecting an institution.

Findings from this study lead to recommendations for higher education practice, including: (1) discuss with students the importance of academic advising and the role the process plays in a student's larger college experience, (2) provide mentorship opportunities for students of color at PWIs, (3) expand required training for academic advisors, (4) create a Center for Diversity and Inclusion on campus, and (5) diversify scholarship offers for students of color. Results of this study can be used to inform how the study institution can better support the academic persistence of students of color through faculty academic advising. Future research addressing faculty academic advising at historically Black colleges and universities as well as Hispanic serving institutions could reveal differences in student perceptions of faculty advising at various institution types. Further, useful information could be gleaned from studies analyzing retention trends of students of color after implementing support services.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In American post-secondary education, a racial disparity exists among different ethnicities in rates of college enrollment and degree attainment, which has the potential to influence future benefits for both the individual pursuing the degree and for society in general. Students of color are less likely to enroll in institutions of higher education and to persist to degree completion than their White counterparts (Snyder, deBray, & Dillow, 2016). Snyder et al. reported, in an annual review of educational data for the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), that whereas 61% of the nearly 7 million students who enrolled in public, four-year post-secondary institutions in Fall 2014 were White, 12% were Black and 16% were Hispanic. Likewise, White students accounted for 52% of the 6.4 million students enrolled in public two-year institutions in 2014, while Black and Hispanic students accounted for 15% and 23%, respectively (Snyder et al.). In 2013, Black and Hispanic students graduated from public college and universities at rates below the national average of 59% for four-year degree programs and 20% for two-year programs, while White students graduated at rates above the national average (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

Educational attainment generates outcomes for individual students and society, as well as institutions of higher education. Employment rates, income potential, and physical health are three factors related to college attainment. The NCES (2017) reported that in 2014, employment rates were higher among 20- to 24-year olds with bachelor degrees than those with some college education but no bachelor's degree, or those with only a high school diploma. A 2011 report sponsored by the Georgetown University

Center on Education and the Workforce stated that “Over a lifetime, individuals with a Bachelor’s degree make 84% more than those with only a high school diploma” (Carnevale, Rose, & Ban, 2011, p. 1). Not only does research show that individuals who earn a college degree experience benefits related to employment, but also to their physical well-being. Included in their nationwide report on the health factors affecting Americans, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) conveyed in 2012 that life expectancy was nine years longer for college graduates than for adults without a high school diploma. This point is further supported by Zimmerman and Woolf (2014) who explained, “Among the most obvious explanations for the association between education and health is that education itself produces benefits that later predispose the recipient to better health outcomes” (p. 3).

Aside from the personal effects education can have on an individual, societal outcomes also exist related to educational achievement. Baum, Ma, and Payea (2013) asserted in their College Board report on the benefits of higher education, that educational achievement provides societal benefits including increased civic engagement and contributions in income tax revenue. Increased tax revenue creates additional funding to be allocated to public education. In quantifying the rate of return of tax dollars on investment in public education, Trostel (2010) wrote, “College education clearly creates substantial fiscal benefits for governments” (p. 244). Trostel advanced that the average fiscal rate of return on societal investment in higher education was at least 10% in 2007, and added that number did not include the social benefits associated with education, such as lower crime rates and greater civic engagement. Not only does participation in higher education provide societal benefits, but it mitigates certain

undesirable community characteristics as well. Museus and Ravello (2010) stated that a lack of educational attainment leads to increased incarceration rates and a lack of academic preparation in subsequent generations.

Colleges and universities are a third entity benefiting from the pursuit of post-secondary education. Institutions are invested, not only in enrolling students, but in retaining them from year to year. Colleges and universities are concerned with student retention because student attrition, or the “gradual reduction in the number of students enrolled” at an institution (Simpson, 2004, p. 14), can lead to fiscal challenges as well as damage to the institution’s reputation, often involved in recruiting more students (Stillman, 2009). For public institutions of higher education that depend, in part, on funding allocations from state governments, the continued enrollment of students from one academic year to the next is crucial for securing tuition revenue (Mortenson, 2012). Community colleges and public, non-research institutions, such as the study institution, receive much larger shares of their annual budgets from state funds than other institution types (Woodhouse, 2015).

State government funding is contingent upon public colleges and universities adhering to state and federal laws. Since the United States (U.S.) Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, public institutions have been legally required to provide equal educational opportunities to students regardless of race (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). Failure to do so could result in the loss of critical funding spent on extensive litigation costs (Kaplin & Lee, 2014) or various sanctions resulting from a violation. For example, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), which investigates incidents of discrimination on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, reported in

2012 that one large state university was required to allocate \$330,000 for outreach programs deemed necessary to correct the violation that was found.

Clearly, student retention affects more than just the individual college student. In an attempt to identify strategies to improve student retention, seminal research focused on the causes of attrition (e.g., Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1975), while others later emphasized the importance of factors present among students who were academically successful (e.g., Berger & Milem, 1999; Harper, 2010). Tinto (1975) asserts in his model of college departure that grade performance is the single strongest indicator of academic dismissal, but that voluntary withdrawal results from “the lack of congruency between the individual and both the intellectual climate of the institution and the social system composed of his peers” (p. 117). Astin (1984) suggested in his theory of student involvement that participation in academic and extra-curricular activities was largely indicative of continued enrollment in college.

Berger and Milem (1999) conducted an informative longitudinal assessment including evaluations at three points in time as part of a larger study of first-year persistence at a selective research university in the Southwest. They concluded from surveys of 1,343 freshmen students that fall semester involvement was strongly predictive of continued enrollment. Berger and Milem also found that “While African-American students enter the institution with strong levels of institutional commitment, they are less likely to perceive the institution as being supportive and less likely to persist” (p. 657). They added that even after controlling for entry characteristics such as political view, high school grade point average, and family income, “being black is the third largest negative predictor of persistence” (p. 657). This research suggests that

academic persistence is uniquely influenced by factors related to a student's race.

Because social integration into the campus community has also been argued as positively related to student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983), colleges and universities are tasked with developing strategies to increase student involvement both in and outside of the classroom setting (Astin, 1984).

Kuhn (2008) explains academic advising as “situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach” (p. 3). Academic advising has been identified as one process in higher education with the potential to increase student retention (e.g., Drake, 2011; McFarlane, 2013; Montag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, & Snell, 2012). Academic advising is used by colleges and universities to support student retention (Cannon, 2013; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Drake, 2011; Floyd-Peoples, 2016; McFarlane, 2013; Montag et al., 2012). Drake (2011) insists that the academic advising process allows students to create relationships with institutional representatives that may help the student feel connected to the institution.

Montag et al. (2012) used focus groups to gather information on the university's role in the process of academic major selection from 49 senior-level undergraduate students at a private, Midwestern university. The researchers concluded that the advising process not only allowed for the selection of and commitment to a major, but that it could influence student satisfaction and retention. McFarlane (2013) concluded from the review of survey data collected from 4,026 first-year college students attending a land-grant university in the state of Oregon, that student satisfaction and persistence were

influenced by frequency of advising as well as who conducted the advising. In writing about the implications of the 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising, Self (2013) explained that most institutions use campus representatives other than faculty to advise students. Much of the literature on best practices in academic advising focuses on professional advisors or an advising approach where professional advisors share the responsibility with faculty members. This study focuses on the faculty-only advising model, which is currently used by the study institution. Habley and McCauley (1987) described a faculty-only advising model as one in which each student is assigned a faculty academic advisor based on his or her field of study.

Researchers have argued the importance of student-faculty interaction in contributing to student retention (e.g., Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lambert, Rocconi, Ribera, Miller, & Dong, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Tinto, 1987; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) used two national data sets to explore the relationship between faculty practices and student engagement. The first data set used for the study was the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and included a sample of 20,226 senior students and 22,033 first-year students. The second data set used for the study was a parallel survey given to faculty at institutions participating in the NSSE. The second data set elicited a sample of 14,336 faculty members from 137 colleges and universities. Umbach and Wawrzynski found that students reported higher levels of involvement and feelings of being supported at the institution when they actively engaged with faculty both in and out of the classroom. Lambert et al. (2012) analyzed data from the 2011 NSSE of over 17,000 undergraduate students at 19 institutions, and concluded that faculty who ensured clarity in their

teaching methods and showed concern for their students, positively affected their students' grade point average as well as persistence. Kuh and Hu (2001) examined data collected from over 5,000 undergraduate students at 126 four-year institutions using the College Students Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), and found that interacting with faculty led to increased student satisfaction and academic effort.

The above studies do not specifically focus on supporting the persistence of students of color. Some researchers have suggested that campus racial climate affects the academic success of minority students, especially at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (e.g., Gusa, 2010; McClain & Perry, 2017; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). McClain and Perry (2017) reviewed literature from nearly two dozen research studies pertaining to the retention of students of color at PWIs and resolved that factors leading to the retention of students of color included: (1) intentional diversity programming, (2) established cultural spaces, (3) hiring faculty and staff of color, and (4) providing social clubs for students of color. McClain and Perry explained that the factors they identified were examined through the lens of a campus racial climate, and differentiated between a campus' *behavioral climate*, or the way members of various groups interact, and *compositional diversity*, or the racial makeup of students and faculty of an institution. Hotchkins (2016) posited that microaggressions, or subtle insults toward people of color (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000), are an indication of a negative campus racial climate. In their qualitative study of 37 Latina/o students at three PWIs, Yosso et al. (2009) gathered information on microaggressions experienced by Latina/o students and asserted a difference between "diversity of convenience... and genuine diversity or pluralism, which seems increasingly difficult to realize" (p. 664). The

authors added that institutional policies designed to increase the number of students of color without a climate to treat such students as equals “can actually contribute to a hostile campus racial climate” (p. 664).

Statement of the Problem

Of the 2.1 million people aged 25 or older in the U.S., 30.3% had a bachelor degree or higher in the years from 2012-2016 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Upon further examination of the rates of educational attainment in the U.S., a racial disparity emerges. In 2014, Black and Hispanic high school graduates were less likely than White students to enroll in college (Snyder et al., 2016). Whereas 61% of the nearly 7 million students who enrolled in public, four-year post-secondary institutions in Fall 2014 were White, 12% were Black and 16% were Hispanic (Snyder et al., 2016). This racial disparity in education persists into rates of college degree completion. In a 2017 publication sponsored by the Lumina Foundation and the National Student Clearinghouse Resource Center, completion rates of 2.8 million first-time freshmen students were reviewed, including 1.6 million White students, roughly 336,000 Black students, and approximately 322,000 Hispanic students. The students were reported as having completed a bachelor’s degree at their starting institution after six years, having completed at another institution, still being enrolled in pursuit of their bachelor’s degree, or no longer enrolled. Student attrition, as evidenced by not being enrolled in college after six years, was stratified by race. The attrition rate of the White students in the sample was 27%, compared to 35% for Hispanic students and 45% for Black students (Shapiro et al., 2017).

This racial discrepancy in degree attainment was also evident in national graduation rates. In 2013, White students graduated from four-year postsecondary

institutions at a rate of 63%, while Black and Hispanic students graduated at rates of 41% and 53%, respectively (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). The gap between White and Black 25- to 29-year-olds with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 13% to 22% between 1995 and 2015, and the gap between White and Hispanic 25- to 29-year-olds increased from 20% to 27% in that time frame (Kena et al., 2016).

The national racial disparity in degree attainment is also evident at the study institution. Although the study institution ensures student-faculty interaction by using a faculty advising model for all students, graduation rates for the institution fell below the aforementioned 2013 national graduation rate of 59% for four-year degree programs (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). The study institution is a public, predominantly White regional institution in the southern United States. In Fall 2016, the institution reported that the six-year graduation rate for students pursuing a bachelor's degree was 37% for White students, but 31% for Hispanic and 16% for Black students (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2017). Not only is this an issue that results in lost tuition revenue for the institution, due to student attrition, but also with regard to social (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013; Trostel, 2010) and personal outcomes (Carnevale, Rose, & Ban, 2011; NCES, 2017; Zimmerman & Woolf, 2014).

In addition to attrition and completion concerns, students of color at the study institution are generally advised by White faculty advisors. In 2017, the study institution reported that the racial composition of its 5,458 students was 63% White students, 4% Black students, and 10% Hispanic students (Fact book, 2017). In Fall 2017, only 0.5% of the 201 faculty advisors at the study institution were Black, and 2.5% of faculty advisors were Hispanic (Institutional Research Specialist, personal communication, August 22,

2018). These statistics support that students of color at the study institution are navigating a predominantly White campus as well as being assigned a campus representative who is unlikely to be a member of their same racial group.

The evidence provided above from prior research indicates that there is disparity in academic achievement among racial groups, and this disparity has long-term ramifications. Students of color are disproportionately leaving their institutions without a degree when compared to their White peers. McFarland et al. (2017) reported in the *2017 Condition of Education* for the NCES that in 2015, the median income of young adults aged 25-34 who worked full time was \$50,000 for those with a bachelor's degree, and \$30,500 for those who had only a high school diploma, a difference of 64%.

Addressing racially disparate educational outcomes is important for colleges and universities, with regard to fulfilling their institutional missions (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012) as well as avoiding suspicion of discriminatory practices. Wilson, Meyer, and McNeal (2012) reviewed the institutional websites of 80 colleges and universities and found that 75% of them reference diversity in their mission statements. For public institutions of higher education, evidence of disparate outcomes based on race could threaten their viability based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This federal law prohibits any institution receiving federal financial assistance from discriminatory actions based on a protected characteristic, including race (*Title VI*, 1964). Such discrimination would result in suspension of federal funds crucial for the survival of public colleges and universities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students of color related to faculty academic advisors at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Of specific interest in this study were the students' perceptions of and experiences with how faculty advisors' actions supported or hindered their persistence, and what the students identified as best practices for supporting students of color at this type of institution. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) defines persistence as "continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution — including one different from the institution of initial enrollment — in the fall semesters of a student's first and second year" (NSCRS, 2014, p. 7). The study institution employs a faculty-only advising method. Though academic advising and student-faculty interaction have been linked to increased student success, the study institution reports persistence and graduation rates well below the national average for students of color. This study used a collective case study design to explore the perceptions that students of color at the study institution had regarding the faculty advising they had received and how it supported their academic persistence.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this study:

1. How do students of color perceive faculty academic advising affects their persistence at a Predominantly White Institution?
2. What interactions with faculty advisors do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution identify as supportive of or hindering to their persistence?

3. What do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution recommend as best practices for faculty advisors to support their academic persistence?

Significance of the Study

There is limited research about how to specifically support students of color through the advising process. Much of the literature on best practices in academic advising focuses on professional advisors, or on the advising approach wherein professional advisors share the responsibility with faculty members (e.g., Allen and Smith, 2008; DiMaria, 2015; Fernandez, Davis, & Jenkins, 2017; King, 2002; Self, 2013). The faculty-only advising approach used at the study institution reflected the advising model used by only 18% of higher education institutions in 2011, according to a national survey of 770 public, private, and proprietary institutions in the U.S. ranging in size from less than 500 students to 36,000 or more students (National Academic Advising Association [NACADA], 2011).

Student attrition costs colleges and universities both in tuition revenue and in reputation, which affects the recruitment of future student (Lau, 2003; Stillman, 2009). In her review of literature pertaining to the factors that affect student retention, Lau (2003) wrote, “The loss of students returning to campus for another year usually results in greater financial loss and a lower graduation rate for the institution, and might also affect the way stakeholders, legislators, parents, and students view the institution” (p. 126). Lau suggests several methods that college institutions could implement to support student retention, including the “effective management of multiculturalism and diversity on campus” (p. 126). The study institution has a fiscal interest in better supporting its students of color, as the retention and graduation rates of Black and Hispanic students at

the university are lower than those of its White students (NCES, 2018). Improving the academic support and subsequent retention of students of color may assist the study institution in offsetting the decrease in state funding allocation that public institutions of higher education are experiencing. Supporting the persistence of students of color is both pragmatic, in the protection of those tuition dollars, and essential for the viability of public colleges and universities. Public institutions of higher education are required to adhere to federal laws protecting equal educational opportunities for individuals, regardless of race (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). Failure to do so could result in the public institution losing its federal aid (DOJ, 2016) or experiencing costly sanctions (OCR, 2012).

While prior research has focused on strategies for student retention as well as the benefits of student-faculty interaction (e.g., Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lambert et al., 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Tinto, 1987; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), less is known about how advising can be used specifically to support students of color at a PWI. This study is significant as it provides research that explores how institutions can better support the academic persistence of students of color through faculty academic advising. Additionally, it contributes to the understanding of the perceptions of students of color regarding what aspects of academic advising support students of color at PWIs. By gathering the perceptions and experiences of students of color who have persisted at the study institution, which is a PWI, this research can advance the understanding within higher education practice of how to better support these students relative to their persistence and retention through degree completion.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework. Harper writes, "most empirical studies amplify minority student failures and deficits instead of achievement" (p. 64). In order to address this, Harper developed an anti-deficit achievement framework based upon the findings of his qualitative study in which he interviewed 219 Black male undergraduate students at 42 colleges and universities in 20 U.S. states to better understand how the participants overcame hurdles and gained admission to select universities. Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework is designed "to discover how some students of color have managed to succeed" (p. 68).

The framework focuses on three "pipeline points" in a student's academic experience including: (1) pre-college socialization and readiness, (2) college achievement, and (3) post-college persistence (p. 67). Harper provides "instead of queries" to enable researchers to shift their research focus from deficit thinking to student achievement frameworks (p. 68). Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework is appropriate to frame this study as its focus is on the perceptions and experiences of students of color relative to factors they identify as supportive to their academic persistence, specifically regarding interactions with their faculty academic advisors.

Summary of Methodology

This qualitative collective case study was conducted through the lens of the constructivist paradigm to explore the perceptions of and experiences that students of color have had with their faculty academic advisor and the advising process. The study was conducted at one PWI located in the southern portion of the U.S. Participants were

12 purposefully selected students of color at the study institution who identified as Black or Hispanic, as those were the two largest minority student groups at the institution at the time of the study. In addition, inclusion criteria for the participants were that they were classified as juniors or seniors.

Data collection for the study occurred through the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and institutional documents. The data was analyzed through the use of the constant comparative method, as well as open and axial coding. In order to ensure trustworthiness throughout the completion of the study as well as in its findings, steps were taken to attain: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability. Credibility was reached using member checking, or asking follow-up questions to the participants for clarification, and sending each participant their respective interview transcript to explain anything that they perceived was not expressed accurately, as well as the inclusion of multiple data sources. Transferability of findings is not intended, but similarities can be drawn by the reader to their own contexts. However, rich, thick descriptions were used to provide ample detail of the participants and settings to “transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). To ensure dependability, a reflexive journal was kept and details are included of how data were coded and analyzed. Confirmability was achieved through the use of rich, thick descriptions, and by disclosing any researcher bias in the reflexive journal.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout the study and are operationalized as follows:

Advising. Advising involves “situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3).

Attrition. Attrition is “a gradual reduction in the number of students enrolled” at an institution (Simpson, 2004, p. 14).

Faculty advising model. Faculty advising is an advising model in which each student is assigned a faculty academic advisor based on his or her field of study (Habley & McCauley, 1987).

Persistence. Persistence is “continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution — including one different from the institution of initial enrollment — in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year” (NSCRC, 2014, p. 7).

Predominantly White institution. “Predominantly [W]hite institution (PWI) is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which White [students] account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment” (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Retention. Retention is “continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the same higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year” (NSCRC, 2014, p. 7).

Students of color. Students of color are socially defined as those belonging to a racial minority group including African American, Latino, Asian, or American Indian/Alaska Native (Rendón, Garcia, & Person, 2004).

Assumptions of the Study

Simon and Goes (2013) explain that assumptions of a study are common beliefs that cannot necessarily be proven. This study is based on the assumption that participants were forthcoming and honest in their interview responses. Additionally, it was assumed that participants would be able to identify experiences or relationships that supported their academic persistence. Lastly, it was assumed that patterns would emerge from the information shared by participants regarding their academic persistence.

Limitations to the Study

Limitations to a study are constraints that are not within the control of the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2013). A limitation to this study is that it was conducted at only one PWI located in the southern region of the United States. Another limitation is that the findings are based on the self-reported experiences and perceptions of the participants involved. The study was limited by the fact that no Hispanic males responded to the invitation to participate in an interview. Although steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness of the research, transferability of the findings to another context is up to the discretion of the reader (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015).

Summary

A racial disparity exists in the rates of both enrollment and degree completion in the higher education setting. This disparity is concerning because of the personal and societal benefits related to postsecondary educational achievement. Academic advising

and student-faculty interaction are identified as practices related to increased student achievement. The study institution uses a faculty academic advising model, ensuring consistent student-faculty interaction, but reports graduation rates below the national average. Further, there are racial gaps evident in the graduation rates reported by the study institution.

Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework was used to frame the study due to its focus on the perceptions of and experiences with faculty advisors that students of color identified as supportive to their persistence at a PWI. By gathering the perceptions of students of color who have persisted at the study institution, which is a PWI, this research can advance the understanding within higher education institutions of how to better support that student population through faculty academic advising.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter II includes a review of the literature related to the history of racial diversity on college campuses and best practices in supporting students of color, as well as the various models and approaches to academic advising in higher education. Chapter III discusses the methodology and research design that was used to conduct the study. Chapter IV will present the study's findings, and Chapter V will offer a discussion of those findings, implications and recommendations based on the findings for higher education practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II provides a review of the literature related to this study. The chapter will discuss: (1) an overview of racial diversity on campus, (2) campus racial climates, (3) best practices in supporting racial diversity on college campuses, (4) academic advising in higher education, (5) advising to support students of color, and (6) the conceptual framework of the study. The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students of color related to faculty academic advisors at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Of specific interest in this study were the students' perceptions of and experiences with how faculty advisors' actions supported or hindered their persistence, and what the students identified as best practices for supporting students of color at this type of institution.

Overview of Racial Diversity on College Campuses

Though Oberlin College in Ohio began admitting Black students alongside White students in the 1830s, the education of slaves was expressly forbidden in the southern states at that time (Corey, 2003). Boston was the first city to desegregate its school system in 1855 (Corey, 2003), but it was not until the end of the Civil War that separate colleges were established for Black students (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Widespread college access began to emerge in 1862, when the first Morrill Act allocated federal land to individual states on which to build public universities or to sell for existing state universities to then use the proceeds (Thelin, 2011). In 1890, the second Morrill Act legally required states to either allow Black students to enroll in state colleges or to establish separate institutions of higher education for Black students (Cohen & Kisker,

2010). In 1896, the United States (U.S.) Supreme Court decided the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in which the Court upheld the notion of separate but equal facilities, including educational establishments, for Blacks and Whites (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). In 1928, over 5% of White Americans aged 18-21 attended college, but less than one-third of 1% of Black Americans in the same age group were enrolled (Lucas, 2006). That year, there were less than 14,000 Black college students and three-quarters of those students attended private Black institutions (Lucas).

A notable case in the desegregation of American schools was the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, in which the separate but equal statute was overturned (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). This ruling was extended in 1956 to higher education with the case of *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control* (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Kaplin & Lee, 2014). From 1945 to 1975, access to American higher education became widespread; whereas 1,677,000 students enrolled in higher education in 1945, that number increased to over 11 million in 1975 (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). A major influence in enrollment during that time period was the end of the second World War when the U.S. Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act in 1944, commonly known as the G.I Bill (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). The G.I. Bill began as a measure to support returning soldiers through unemployment benefits and vocational training, but also availed funding for attending public institutions of higher education (Thelin, 2011). The G.I. Bill created unintended consequences, including access to higher education becoming more inclusive, and public enrollment surpassing that of private institutions because of the funding available for returning soldiers to attend public institutions (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Lucas, 2006).

Another key influence in increased access to and enrollment in American higher education occurred in 1964 with the Civil Rights Act. That act and the Equal Pay Act in the 1963 increased educational access to higher education by broadly banning racial discrimination in institutions receiving federal funding (Kaplin & Lee, 2014). After this legal shift in access came an event that affected financial barriers to higher education. The Education Amendments of 1972 offered guaranteed federal loans and grants to students who otherwise would not have had the financial resources to attend college (Edwards & Nordin, 1979). These amendments to Title IX provided broad-based federal support for the academic endeavors of students of color. During the 1970's, enrollment in public higher education expanded rapidly. Public community colleges enrolled five million students in 1975, which was more than all students enrolled in higher education only 12 years prior (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

Since the 1970s, racial disparity emerged in the rate of college enrollment. In 1972, about half of White high school graduates enrolled in college the fall after high school graduation compared to 73% in the fall of 2005 (NCES, 2007). Although Black and Hispanic students enrolled in college immediately after high school at about the same rates as their White peers in 1972, by 2005 an enrollment gap had grown with Black and Hispanic students both enrolling at rates below 60% (NCES, 2007). Between 2000 and 2014, undergraduate enrollment at all degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased 31% from 13.2 million to 17.3 million, and that trend is expected to continue into 2025 to bring the total enrollment to 19.8 million (Kena et al., 2016). Despite this continued trend in enrollment, educational attainment varies by race.

Disparate Educational Attainment

Between 2000 and 2016, educational attainment rates, or the number of people earning a high school diploma, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or master's degree, increased among 25- to 29-year-olds in the U. S. (NCES, 2017). However, while White students have been over-represented in institutions with more selective admissions criteria, their African American counterparts have been over-represented in less selective institutions, such as community colleges with no academic admissions criteria (Supiano, 2015). In the fall of 2014, 56% of Hispanic undergraduates in the U.S. and 44% of Black undergraduates were enrolled in community colleges compared to 39% of White undergraduates (Ma & Baum, 2015). The differences evident between racial groups continues into degree attainment. In 2013, the overall six-year graduation rate for bachelor's degree-seeking students was 59% (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). While White students graduated from four-year degree programs at a rate of 63% within six years, Black and Hispanic students graduated at rates of 41% and 53%, respectively (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). This disparity is more pronounced in degree attainment at the graduate level. Whereas 69% of doctorate degrees were awarded to White students in 2015, 8% were awarded to Black scholars and 7% were awarded to Hispanic students in that year (IPEDS, 2017).

Researchers have investigated the causes of educational achievement by focusing specifically on one racial group. To explore the root causes of the disproportionately low educational achievement of Black males, Palmer and Maramba (2011) employed a qualitative design and in-depth participant interviews. These researchers interviewed six students of color at a public, mid-size university in the northeast U.S. They concluded

that stereotype threat contributed to the academic disengagement of the participants.

Stereotype threat involves the fear of confirming negative racial stereotypes (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Another study focused on the academic achievement of Hispanic students. Marisco and Getch (2009) explored why Hispanic students were the largest minority group in colleges and universities but reported some of the lowest educational attainment. The researchers suggested Hispanic students experience barriers to college enrollment. Marisco and Getch provided, as an example, the possibility of a Hispanic high school graduate being the first in their family to attend college, which can be exacerbated by a language barrier if the institution does not offer recruitment materials in Spanish alongside those in English. Spanish-speaking parents often do not know where to access information to prepare their children for the process of high school graduation and subsequent application to college (Marisco & Getch).

Another approach to understanding Hispanic student engagement is to focus on external factors affecting the student, such as institutional recruiting practices and federal funding availability. Montiel (2002) argued that colleges and universities do not actively recruit Hispanic students out of high school. Montiel suggested that the traditional recruitment methods of high school visits and college brochures exclusively in English are not as effective for the Hispanic high school population than they are for other ethnic groups. Villarreal and Santiago (2012) explain that Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), those with 25% or more of their full-time student enrollment being comprised of Hispanic students, rose from 135 in 1995 to 311 in 2010. They went on to contend that Hispanic student success is being increasingly supported through federal Title V allocations, which encompass federal grants, loans, and work study funding. Title V

allows receiving institutions to use funding for initiatives such as English as a Second Language programs and tutoring services, which are academically beneficial to Hispanic students (Villareal & Santiago).

Researchers focusing specifically on Black college students suggest there is no one best practice related to recruitment or subsequent academic support of that population. Contreras et al. (2018) conducted a mixed-methods study of over 700 high-achieving Black undergraduate students. The researchers asserted that access, outreach, diversity, and campus racial climate each affect the institutional selection of Black students. Williams (2018) suggests Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are restricted from making contact with students early in their high school years due to limited resources. She recommended those institutions rely on alumni involvement to make contact with and to recruit Black students. Strayhorn (2008) conducted an ex post facto survey to study how supportive relationships on campus were related to the academic achievement and satisfaction that Black male students reported with their institution. He asserted, “understanding factors that influence Black males’ satisfaction can assist us in structuring collegiate environments and learning opportunities that engender student success” (p. 41). The research listed below will reveal how a campus’ racial climate may affect the persistence of students of color.

Campus Racial Climate

Though college campuses are experiencing a structural diversification, or increase in the proportion of their student bodies who identify as members of a racial minority group, that change in student demographic can be problematic if support services are not implemented for students of color (Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem, 1998).

Not all campuses have cultures that embrace the diversification of their student body, substantiating Harper's (2009) claim of the "permanence of racism" (p. 709) and the idea that racism is "endemic to U.S. life" (p. 467).

American higher education was historically developed for and by White males (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Lucas, 2006), and it has been argued that remnants of structural racial advantages persist (Gusa, 2010; Rendón, 1994). Gusa (2010) provided the example of legacy admissions at institutions that use "White sociohistoric inheritance criteria that give(s) preferentiality to Whites who long have had access to higher education" (p. 470). Gusa also demonstrated curricular disparity with the example of race coding in textbooks. The example of race coding given by Gusa was the use of a picture of a Black family to illustrate welfare recipients and a picture of a White couple used to illustrate social security recipients. Gusa's interpretation was that the textbooks that students are required to read send messages to students that people of color are more likely to receive welfare. Gusa suggested that these coded messages may be overlooked by White students, but "do not escape the awareness of African American students" (p. 478).

In their influential work, Hurtado et al. (1998) described campus racial climate as being comprised of an institution's: (1) historical legacy, (2) structural diversity, (3) perceptions and attitudes between and among ethnic groups, and (4) intergroup relations. The researchers stated that the *historical legacy* of an institution includes any historical vestiges that affect racial group interaction, such as a history of resisting racial integration or attitudes and behaviors that prevent racial interaction. *Structural diversity* is the actual number of students of color enrolling at an institution. *Perceptions and attitudes* between

ethnic groups are described as the psychological dimension of the racial climate, and *intergroup relations* are the behavioral dimension. Hurtado et al. concluded that diversity at an institution occurs, not only with an increased number of students of color enrolling, but with those students being incorporated into the campus community and supported by the institution through policy and practice.

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) proposed that racism on college campuses commonly occurs in the covert form of microaggressions, or “subtle insults (verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color” (p. 60). Solórzano et al. conducted focus group interviews with 34 African American students at three elite PWIs that explored how African American students experienced their campus racial climates. They found that the participants experienced racial microaggressions both in and out of academic settings, which affected the students’ academic and social lives. Focus group participants shared that their experiences on campus included being excluded from study groups, being expected to perform poorly, and feeling unwelcome in various social settings. Solórzano et al. suggested that experiencing microaggressions results in the recipients experiencing academic discouragement, self-doubt, isolation, and hyper-vigilance.

Microaggression is a term that was coined by Harvard University professor, Chester Pierce, in the 1970s (Zamudio-Suaréz, 2016). Pierce (1989) states, “Microaggressions are basic in keeping any Black donating to the quality and perhaps the quantity of life for any White at the expense of the Black's own quality and quantity of life” and added, “they seem to be the principle foundation for the verification of Black inferiority for both Whites and Blacks” (p. 308). Hotchkins (2016) suggests that

microaggressions are a symptom of a negative campus racial climate. In his comparative case study of six African American male high school students, Hotchkins resolved that participants experienced microaggressions as a result of deficit thinking, or stereotype perceptions held by White teachers. He surmised that White teachers' deficit thinking toward African American students stems from "inaccurate racial assumptions of deviance" (p. 2). Although Hotchkins' study occurred in the K-12 setting, it could be informative in understanding deficit perceptions of White institutional representatives in colleges and universities as well.

In the higher education setting, Gusa (2010) proposed that deficit perceptions of students of color refers to the ways nondominant racial groups are evaluated as deficient in comparison to the dominant, White culture. Harding (2012) advanced, in a National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) publication, that race and ethnicity remain problematic issues for students entering higher education settings. In speaking of deficit thinking based on racial stereotypes, Harding appealed, "We must keep in mind that differences are just that and not deficiencies" (para. 14).

Microaggressions on College Campuses

Authors have posited in several conceptual papers that microaggressions are prevalent for students of color on college campuses, especially at PWIs (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2016; Gusa, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). Supporting that assertion, Klonoff and Landrine (1999) found in a sample of 520 African Americans aged 18-79, living in Southern California that 96% of participants reported experiencing racist discrimination within the preceding year. More recently, Torres-Harding, Andrade, and Romero (2012) conducted a quantitative study of 406 individuals recruited from both higher education

and community settings. Participants varied in age from 18-76 and 53.6% of them identified as students. The researchers found that 91% of participants reported experiencing a *recent* racist event, defined in the study as having occurred within the past year. In a study involving 187 undergraduate women who identified as Black, 96% of participants reported experiencing some type of racial microaggression “a few times a year” (Donovan, Galban, Grace, Bennett, & Felicié, 2013, p. 185). Donovan et al. reported that the effects of racial microaggressions on undergraduate Black women included symptoms of depression and anxiety.

To better conceptualize the dynamics of microaggressions, Sue et al. (2007) developed a taxonomy of microaggressions experienced by people of color in everyday life. The taxonomy delineates three forms of microaggression: (1) microassaults, (2) microinsults, and (3) microinvalidations. Microassaults are explicitly derogatory toward a person of color, such as name-calling or avoidant behavior. Microinsults are described as “subtle snubs” that convey hidden insults (p. 274). Microinvalidations are “communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color” (p. 274). Sue et al. contended that effects of such microaggressions range from loss of self-esteem and trust of the people of color who experience them, to creating discord between racial groups.

Racial microaggressions are difficult to detect in that they can often be justified by nonbiased motivations (Sue et al.). In a qualitative study using focus groups to gather data from 37 Latina/o students attending three elite PWIs, Yosso et al. (2009) confirmed that withstanding a multitude of microinsults over time led participants to experience racial battle fatigue. Smith (2004) defines racial battle fatigue as “a natural response to

distressing mental/emotional work when facing consistent hostile classroom challenges and confrontations, potential threats or danger under tough to violent and potentially life-threatening conditions” (p. xviii). Although Smith developed the term related to his research on Black students at PWIs, the term has can arguably be applied to the experiences of multiple minority groups in predominantly White settings.

The aforementioned study by Yosso et al. (2009) involved a qualitative study that utilized focus groups of Latina/o students at PWIs to gather information on their experiences with microaggressions on campus. The researchers studied 37 Latina/o students, 19 females and 18 males, at three elite PWIs. The study institutions included one private university located on the east coast, and two public universities, one on the west coast and the other in the Midwest. Yosso et al. describe three forms of covert racism experienced by the Latino participants in their study including: (1) interpersonal microaggressions, (2) institutional microaggressions, and (3) racial jokes. Interpersonal microaggressions included verbal and nonverbal offenses from students or faculty in academic and social spaces. Institutional microaggressions were described as a negative campus racial climate. Yosso et al. designated racial jokes in their research as “a persistent part of the White campus subculture” (p. 669).

Whiteness on College Campuses

Cabrera, Watson, and Franklin (2016) suggested that White entitlement on college campuses occurs in the denial of racism and assumption of White ownership over physical spaces. They insisted that there is a necessary amount of dissonance needed both for White students to “develop their racial selves” and to bring attention to “the ugly realities of contemporary racism” (p. 119). To examine relationships between

perceptions of racial climate, multicultural support services, and ethnic fraud among American Indian college students, Pewewardy and Frey (2004) administered a 33-item survey to 409 undergraduate students at a state university in the southern Midwest. The researchers found a substantial difference existed between the campus perceptions of Native American participants and their White counterparts. While focusing on a different ethnic subgroup than those included in this study, those findings have implications for colleges and universities. Pewewardy and Frey concluded that an inattention to issues of race on campus negatively affects the institution's racial climate and could lead to a lack of responsiveness by institution personnel.

Villareal, Cabrera, and Friedrich (2012) reviewed literature on Latino student success in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The researchers cited that, despite the Latino population's rapid growth in America, they continue to be underrepresented in STEM. Villareal et al. concluded that Latino students perceive a chilly climate and unwelcoming environment in their STEM courses. Finally, they suggested that colleges must address teaching methods and classroom climates to support Latino student success.

In her conceptual paper, *White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate*, Gusa (2010) wrote, "The intertwined social, political, and economic milieu of each African American creates a heterogeneous Black college population. As such, the social and economic impact of a predominantly White chilly climate on African American students will vary" (p. 466). Gusa was explaining that African American students are individuals with unique experiences, so they will experience a campus' racial climate individually. However individual student experiences with a campus racial

climate may be, aforementioned data related to college enrollment and graduation suggests that educational achievement remains racially disparate. In acknowledging the racial disparity in degree attainment, the following literature reviewed addresses best practices for supporting the success of students of color.

Supporting Racial Diversity on College Campuses

Although research has suggested additional challenges for Black and Hispanic students in higher education because of systemic disadvantages and challenging interpersonal interactions (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995), there are practices suggested to support the academic success of students of color on college campuses. These practices begin during the recruitment process and continue through the students' first-year transition. Research suggests that colleges and universities may be able to improve the support they offer students of color in their educational pursuits by confronting racially oppressive cultural norms to improve the campus racial climate (Gusa, 2010; Cabrera et al., 2016), and by providing diversity training for students and employees (Hurtado, 2007), as well as additional strategies discussed below.

Recruiting for Racial Pluralism

Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, and Pratto (1997) wrote that ethnic pluralism is a construct that implies:

- (a) rather than dissolving into a unitary ethnicity of nationhood, ethnic subgroups continue to maintain their distinctiveness, (b) all of these ethnic subgroups are considered coequal partners in society, where no one group dominates any other group, and (c) individuals can simultaneously maintain a positive commitment both to an ethnic particularism and to the larger political community. (p. 104)

To recruit college students with a focus on ethnic pluralism, the researchers discussed below all addressed the importance of colleges and universities facilitating family involvement when reaching out to potential new students. To do so, Thomas (2009) outlined various recruitment efforts for minority students including family orientation night, providing a bus for those who may not have their own means of transportation, and ensuring diversity among recruitment staff.

In order to increase the number of Hispanic students enrolling in college, it is crucial to involve the family in the recruitment process (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gilroy, 2010; Marisco & Getch, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Hispanic students “tend to be more group-oriented, have larger families, and think in terms of doing something for the family instead of the individual” (Gilroy, 2010, p. 20). In a study designed to explore how well public universities recruit and retain Hispanic students, Montalvo (2013) employed a mixed-methods study of 109 universities across the U.S. He found that providing a bilingual diversity page on an institution’s website was helpful in retaining Hispanic students. Montalvo suggested the importance of displaying images on a university website that express the value of racial diversity at the institution. Castellanos and Gloria (2007) advanced that family represents a core value within the Latina/o culture and institutions would benefit from acknowledging that in their programming. When discussing a college’s efforts to enroll more Hispanic students, Hispanic marketing specialist, Raul Lorenzo, advised simply, “recruit the family” (Gilroy, 2010, p. 20).

Students in Transition

Tinto’s (1975) work on student departure and subsequent focus on student integration into the campus community is widely influential in informing the field of

higher education retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Tinto (1975) summarized that, although academic performance is the strongest indicator for future dropout, dropout from college is “the outcome of a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the institution (peers, faculty, administration, etc.)” (p. 103). In a later publication, Tinto (1988) presented a model of college transition to include three stages that students experience transitioning from high school to college. The three stages are: (1) separation from a student’s past community and residence, (2) transition to college, including acquiring the norms of the student’s new college community, and (3) incorporation in college, or integration into the campus culture. Tinto recommended institutions “front-load” efforts to transition students within the first six weeks of an academic year to prevent early departure (p. 451).

Gonzalez and Morrison (2016) argued that Tinto’s stages of passage do not apply to students of color. They contended that Latina/o students are family-oriented and rejected the notion that discarding their existing culture is necessary to exist in a new campus culture. In her analysis of the experiences of students of color on campus, Turner (1994) made the analogy of being a guest in someone else’s home and never gaining the sense of belonging that a full-member of the community would enjoy. This unease is a feeling expressed by Conrad and Gasman (2015) in their book compiling best practices of minority-serving institutions. In the chapter discussing how HSIs and HBCUs better support students of color than their majority-serving counterparts, Conrad and Gasman advanced that students of color who attend PWIs feel pressured to assimilate as opposed to representing their individual cultural traditions.

Supporting Students of Color on College Campuses

Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002) claimed that people of color are undereducated in America, stating, “Institutions are encouraged to develop and provide appropriate resources and services not simply because of the ‘browning of America’ but because the development and success of all students should be of primary concern for institutions of higher education” (p. 20). Whereas some literature supports implementing mentor programs for incoming Hispanic students (e.g., DiMaria, 2015; Nuñez & Bowers, 2011), other research indicates the effectiveness of cultural centers in supporting the minority student population (e.g., Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Jones et al., 2002). Additionally, Gilroy (2010) suggested having a point of contact at the institution to communicate with parents and answer questions they may have once their family members start attending classes.

When interacting with students of color, institutional faculty and staff should expect successful student outcomes, offer intentional support services, and foster a shared responsibility for student academic success (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). Palmer and Maramba (2011) suggested instructors combat stereotype threat with African American students by surrounding them with positive images and content related to Black scholars, as well as inviting Black professionals to classes to discuss how they overcame their own trials and used education to attain their own positive outcomes.

In her conceptual paper highlighting “the salience of race by scrutinizing the culture of Whiteness within predominantly White institutions of higher education” (p. 464), Gusa (2010) suggested that hiring faculty and administrators of color is beneficial in increasing feelings of belongingness for students in a racial minority. Yosso et al.

(2009) determined that Latina/o students do not retreat from the hostility they experience on campus, but achieve the aforementioned belongingness by finding community within the larger campus and seeking out diversity courses in which to enroll. Parker, Barnhardt, Pascarella, and McCowin (2016) suggested that diversity courses positively influence college students' moral development in addition to their psychological well-being, bias reduction, and civic engagement. Hurtado et al. (1998) also provided evidence of the educational benefits of diversity in their policy review for the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) by claiming that students who interact with students of other races are more likely to hold positive interracial attitudes and be more satisfied with the institution. In her Presidential address to ASHE, Hurtado (2007) asserted, "When all students learn about diversity, we are producing citizens who can negotiate difference, act, and make ethical decisions in an increasingly complex and diverse world" (p. 192).

Confronting Whiteness as the Cultural Norm

Gusa (2010) and Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, and Galindo (2014) described PWIs as having a history of whiteness as the cultural norm on campus. This historical context persists, leaving students of color at such institutions navigating on the margins of the campus society (Gusa, 2010). African American students, for example, elect to attend HBCUs over PWIs because HBCUs "provide more social and psychological support, higher levels of satisfaction and sense of community, and a greater likelihood that students will persist and complete their degrees" (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 282). However, Hurtado et al. explained that most students of color are educated in predominantly White environments. When Black students elect to attend PWIs, Gusa

(2010) suggested that the racial discrimination they experience is one factor leading them to withdraw from the institution.

Gusa (2010) insisted, “To acknowledge Whiteness is not to perpetuate it, but it is the first step in uprooting it” (p. 478). Cabrera et al. (2016) supported that notion in their argument that a certain amount of dissonance, or discomfort, is necessary in confronting racism. Barker (2011) advanced that because White instructors at PWIs may lack an understanding of the personal and academic experiences of students of color, institutions should strive for racial diversity in their professoriate and offer diversity training for White faculty. Gusa (2010) claimed that being surrounded by White culture as the norm minimizes the experiences and identities of African American students. When discussing how confronting Whiteness should inform institutional policy and practice, Hurtado et al. (1998) advised, “Campus leaders should insure that the perspectives of all members of the campus community be considered in the decision-making processes” because perceptions of the campus climate will inevitably vary based on the experiences of the person being asked (p. 288). Hurtado et al. (1998) posited that is it not a lack of comfort that will help mitigate racial tensions on campus, but the creation of student-centered environments. They suggested institutions need to respond to increased racial pluralism with specific academic support programs, ethnic studies programs, diverse student organizations, and multicultural programming.

Academic Advising in Higher Education

Of the many services that colleges and universities offer to support students, academic advising is widely accepted as one that contributes to student satisfaction and retention (Cannon, 2013; Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Drake, 2011; Floyd-

Peoples, 2016; McFarlane, 2013; Montag et al., 2012). Drake (2011), a former president of NACADA, emphasized that academic advising is “about building relationships with our students, locating places where they get disconnected, and helping them get reconnected” (p. 8). Kuhn (2008) describes academic advising as “situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach” (p. 3).

American institutions of higher education have assumed the responsibility of guiding students down the right path since their inception (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Lucas, 2006). Historically, this responsibility began with the concept of *in loco parentis*, or the institution serving as a student’s substitute guardian, because American college students in the early 1900s were commonly as young as 14 or 15 years of age (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Advising students holistically, including monitoring their conduct outside of class, was originally a natural responsibility of college faculty because American higher education began as training for clergymen and most instructors were members of the clergy (Lucas, 2006). Lucas (2006) explained that it was widely accepted that the few faculty and the university president would be responsible for advising students until the early twentieth century when full-time professional advisors were introduced. This delineation of roles between teaching and advising allowed faculty to move away from administrative roles to focus on instruction and research (Lucas, 2006).

A major shift in college and university advising took place in the mid-1900s when colleges could no longer feasibly monitor the behavior of the growing number of students and the notion of *in loco parentis* became generally obsolete (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). In

2011, the median number of students assigned to a professional, full-time advisor was 296 (Robbins, 2013). The median number of advisees assigned to advisors in the largest institutions was 600, based on a 2011 NACADA survey of 770 higher education institutions in the U.S., though the number varied by the size and type of the university (Robbins).

O'Banion (1972, 1994, 2009) identified five distinct steps occurring in the advising process: (1) investigation of life goals, (2) examination of vocational goals, (3) choosing a degree, (4) choosing courses, and (5) scheduling courses. O'Banion suggested the first two steps as tasks that could be accomplished with a campus counselor as they involve the exploration of personal preferences. He envisioned steps three and four occurring with a faculty member because of their academic authority, and suggested that the process of selecting the actual course schedule could happen with a trained student peer.

Advising Models

At the inception of American higher education, colleges were small enough that faculty were not only responsible for educating students and advising them in their scholarly pursuits, but also had temporary guardianship of the students when living at the institution (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Lucas, 2006). Low faculty-to-student ratios allowed for individual attention for each student. With the growth of colleges and universities in the twentieth century, faculty were no longer able to perform all student support services. Support positions were added to accommodate rising enrollment numbers and subsequent administrative tasks such as student registration, billing, academic advising, and career

counseling (Lucas, 2006). This set the stage for the delineation of advising responsibilities and variation in the assignment of those duties.

Contemporary institutions execute academic advising services in a variety of ways based on various institutional characteristics such as size and mission (Self, 2013). Habley and McCauley (1987) outlined seven models for the implementation of advising on a college campus: (1) faculty-only advising, (2) supplementary advising, (3) split-advising, (4) dual advising, (5) the total intake model, (6) the satellite model, and (7) the self-contained model. To simplify, three models will be discussed including the faculty-only model, the self-contained or professional model, and the dual model of advising. Whereas the faculty-only model involves strictly academic department faculty as advisors, the self-contained model involves a completely centralized advising office staffed by full-time advisors. A dual advising model, however, enacts shared responsibility for student advisement, with advising staff responsible for assisting students through general education courses and a faculty member advising students through their academic major courses. King (2002) advanced that professional advisors and faculty each bring unique benefits to the advising process. Whereas faculty advisors offer expertise within an academic major and related job market, professional advisors are knowledgeable about college student development and are often found in a centralized campus location (King).

Faculty advisors. Despite the potential for student-faculty interactions via academic advising, even advocates of a faculty model of advising concede instructors may view advising as a secondary priority to teaching and research (e.g., Allen & Smith, 2008; Self, 2013). Allen and Smith (2008) conducted a qualitative study involving 171

faculty at a doctoral, research-intensive public urban university. The purpose was to explore faculty perceptions of academic advising. The researchers found that faculty advisors involved in their study perceived advising functions to be important, but they did not feel responsible for all of the advising they perceived necessary for students to receive (i.e., explaining university functions or making non-academic referrals).

Although more recent publications indicate most institutions implement academic advising using institutional personnel other than faculty (Self, 2013), King (2002) explained, in her paper for the NACADA Journal, that some institutions use a faculty advising model because it is less expensive than a centralized model. When implementing a faculty model for academic advising, Self (2013) cautioned that instructors may be overwhelmed when adding advising responsibilities to their existing teaching and research obligations, but advanced that it is the most commonly used advising model at small, private institutions. Presumably, faculty advising is more manageable at smaller institutions with lower enrollment and subsequently smaller advisee loads for faculty to attend to along with their teaching and research obligations.

Professional advisors. In the debate about which institutional position is more appropriate for carrying out advisement, Astin (1984) offered a strong argument for the case of university staff in his assertion that “student personnel workers frequently operate on a one-on-one basis with students” and are in a better position to gauge how involved the student is in campus activities (p. 526). This level of interaction would differ greatly from faculty whose daily interaction with students is often confined to the classroom group setting. According to the 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising, most of the 770 institutions surveyed choose representatives other than faculty to conduct

academic advisement on their campuses (Self, 2013). Although Allen and Smith (2008) conceded that academic advising facilitates out-of-class interaction between faculty and students, they asserted, “Expecting that students will have all of their advising needs met by one faculty member for whom advising is only one of several responsibilities (not to mention a low-status and unrewarded activity) may be a disservice to students” (p. 623).

McFarlane (2013) conducted a quantitative study of 628 undergraduate students with the purpose of determining if a relationship existed between how academic advising is delivered to first-year students and the students’ satisfaction with advising, advising learning outcomes, and retention. Participants who met with professional advisors as opposed to faculty or peer advisors were reportedly more satisfied, and perceived they had attained student learning outcomes at higher rates. In the same study, participants who had chosen to meet with their advisor more than once per year reported higher rates of satisfaction with their advising experience than those who met with their advisor only once in a year. McFarlane concluded from his research that which university representative advises students and the frequency of advising meetings were both important factors in affecting first-year student retention.

In other commentary on advising models, O’Banion (1972, 1994, 2009) insisted that community colleges were too eager in adopting the faculty advising model used by four-year institutions. This was in response to a 1964 Chicago academic conference in which a leading student personnel educator from a large university posited, “Of course this [faculty advising] model is appropriate for the junior college. Faculty members should do the advising regardless of the institution” (O’Banion, 2009, p. 83). O’Banion (2009) eventually arrived at the position that the person performing the advising is

“probably not as important as the philosophy of the institution” and the commitment of the advisor to understanding the advising process (p. 85).

The dual advising model. O’Banion (1972, 1994, 2009) postulated that the most effective way to share the five elements of advising that he presented would be for students to interact with various institutional representatives at various stages in the advising process. Habley and McCauley (1998) explained the dual advising model as one in which “Each student has two advisors. A member of the instructional faculty advises the student on matters related to the major. An advisor in an advising office advises the student on general requirements, procedures, and policies” (p. 35). This sharing of responsibility addresses the shortcoming of the faculty-only advising model suggested by Allen and Smith’s (2008) aforementioned research in which faculty perceived that they are not responsible for all aspects of student advising.

DiMaria (2015) outlined an example of such a model used at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa in which students were assigned a professional advisor during their first year, and progressed to having a faculty advisor in subsequent years. In this example, professional advisors are viewed as teachers assisting transitioning students with the content of a campus community and related campus expectations. Fernandez, Davis, and Jenkins (2017) presented preliminary results of a redesigned advising structure at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, a public HBCU, designed with the intention of creating “a shared holistic advising continuum aimed at equipping students with success skills and learning support to be academically, professionally, and personally successful” (p. 29). Beginning in the fall of 2016, each student was assigned two advisors, one faculty advisor in their academic department and

the other from the university's Center for Academic Excellence. After the first year of the program, the number of students placed on academic probation decreased 36.4%. University administrators concluded, "Academic Advising is an integral component of student success. A shared advising model can be an effective way to achieve student success for all students, including marginalized groups" (p. 30).

In a review of advising literature, Krush and Winn (2010) suggested using a dual or shared advising model to include: (1) faculty involvement in first-year experience courses, (2) the use of an advising syllabus to outline expectations, (3) tracking student progress, (4) career counseling, (5) the integration of professional advisors into the academic department, and (6) consistency of advising sessions. In their discussion of advising assessment, Powers, Carlstrom, and Hughey (2014) concluded involving professional advisors alongside faculty in a dual advising model is the best method for assessing advising efforts on campus.

Advising Approaches

Crookston coined the terms *prescriptive advising* and *developmental advising* in the early 1970s, when he presented an advisement model involving faculty advisors and vocational counselors working together (Williams, 2007). Crookston (1972) delineated between prescriptive advisement, based on the authority of the advisor, and developmental advisement, based on a mutual exchange of information, by contrasting several components of the two advising approaches including which party (the advisor or advisee) has the control or the responsibility. Crookston explained that a prescriptive advising approach leads to an emphasis on course grades and causes advisors to focus on student limitations, but a developmental approach to advising emphasizes content

mastery and leads the advisor to focus on student potentialities. He advanced that faculty should embrace developmental advising as an opportunity for shared responsibility and growth.

Crocker, Kahla, and Allen (2014) presented a case study from Austin State University in which data was compiled on nearly 400 undergraduate students. Because faculty advisors at the university complained that there was no mechanism at the institution to ensure students took the courses they were advised to take, the researchers conducted the study with the purpose of exploring whether following faculty advice influenced student grade point average (GPA). The researchers used regression analysis to analyze the students' level of deviation from advising, measured by the number of credit hours taken during the semester that were not on the approved advising form from their faculty advisor. They found that the students who followed faculty advice had higher GPA outcomes. Crocker et al. concluded that students adhere to the suggested schedule when they understand the importance of the course sequence and subsequently had better academic outcomes. They resolved that there is a hierarchy of advising styles with prescriptive advising being the least desirable, followed by intrusive advising, and ultimately developmental as the most effective approach because of the trusting relationship that it fosters between student and advisor.

Prescriptive advisement. Crookston (1972) describes the prescriptive advising approach as being rooted in authority and criticizes that the advisor “may remain relatively uninvolved, if not aloof” (p. 79). He used a medical analogy to illustrate that the student (i.e., patient) presents to the faculty advisor (i.e., doctor) with a problem for the advisor to administer a solution (e.g., course schedule). In that approach, the student

has little input in the advisement process. Based on his analysis of the 2011 National Academic Advising survey, Robbins (2013) posited that, although many researchers support developmental advising as the most effective approach, prescriptive advising is more appropriate in certain circumstances. He gave the examples of a student in a highly prescriptive academic program or a student arriving for his or her first semester of college who wants to be told which courses are required.

Although the general trend in the literature is that prescriptive advising is not the preferred, nor the most effective model, some researchers offer that prescriptive advisement has its benefits for students of color and first-year students (e.g., Brown & Rivas, 1994; Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). Brown and Rivas (1994) argued that prescriptive advising is more beneficial for students of color, and that the approach should not be perceived as incongruous with the developmental approach to advising. Smith (2002) conducted focus groups with 34 first-year students at the University of Albany and found that, while participants prefer developmental advising, they more frequently experienced a prescriptive approach. He suggested that a prescriptive advising approach is more appropriate for advising first-year students.

Developmental advisement. The developmental model of advisement has been the most commonly used model in higher education since the 1970s (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005), as well as the most preferred among students (Hale, Graham, & Johnson, 2009). Crookston (1972) explained that within the developmental advising model, both the student and the faculty member are learning, and the student's goals are identified with the advisor through dialog and exploration. Crookston presented developmental academic advisement as a more effective model than prescriptive

advisement, with regard to student academic success, in its focus on developing a relationship between advisor and advisee. Montag et al. (2012) focused on the importance of using this model with Millennial students, those born after 1982, because of their general traits including considering themselves special, being achievement focused, and relying on others for support. They added that in the developmental approach to academic advising, students ultimately make their own decisions but receive more guidance from the faculty advisor about courses and potential future careers.

Crocker et al. (2014) described the “ultimate advising system” as one involving developmental advisement paired with a relationship of trust built by ensuring that a student sees the same advisor throughout his or her college experience (p. 9). Schreiner and Anderson (2005) advanced that the developmental advisement model is beneficial in that it fosters individual attention that focuses on a student’s strengths. These and other researchers have posited developmental advising as the preferred advising approach relative to the student’s development and college experience. Crookston (1972) acknowledged that drawbacks to the approach include the investment of time that the model requires, as well as that it requires faculty buy-in to be effective. Though developmental advisement may require more of an investment of time, it may not be required in every student interaction. Weir, Dickman, and Fuqua (2005) suggested advisors use both prescriptive and developmental advising approaches based on what is most appropriate for the individual student and situation.

Intrusive advisement. Intrusive advisement is generally referred to as such because it is proactive in making contact with student advisees as opposed to waiting for a student to initiate contact (Cannon, 2013). In an article for the NACADA Journal,

Cannon (2013) explained that intrusive advisement focuses on developing a relationship between advisor and advisee early in the semester by sending emails to advisees and attending campus orientation events, as well as making intentional contact with advisees throughout the semester, as opposed to only during the campus enrollment period.

Merberg (n.d.) described the goal of intrusive advisement as an advisor being able to “identify and respond to issues that prevent our students from making a successful transition to college” (p. 3).

Roufs (2015) surmised that, while prescriptive advising guides a student through degree completion, developmental advising does more to “help advisees examine personal values and implement plans to lead satisfying, gratifying, and productive lives” (p. 68). However, advising approaches are not mutually exclusive. For example, advising may be simultaneously intrusive and developmental, whether performed by a faculty member or professional advisor. Although advising procedures vary by institution, it is an opportunity for colleges to monitor a student’s academic progress as well as their needs, and is therefore a useful tool in affecting change in student satisfaction and retention.

Use of Advising to Retain Students

Student retention affects every aspect of an institution of higher education (Stillman, 2009). For colleges and universities, student departure results in both a loss of tuition revenue and the reputation necessary to attract future students (Lau, 2003; Stillman, 2009). Compounding the issue of financial reliance on tuition income is the continually decreasing state funding allocated to public higher education (Mortenson, 2012). Mortenson maintains that despite consistent interest in higher education since the

1970s, state financial contributions have been in steady decline since the 1980s, and are projected to be eliminated completely by the year 2059. Because state funding is increasingly tenuous, institutions of higher education are focused on processes by which they may improve student retention and subsequent tuition revenue.

Cannon (2013) describes the advising process as “one of our best retention tools” because of its potential to enhance student participation (para. 1). Retention is defined by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) as “continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the same higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year” (NSCRC, 2014, p. 7). Studies have advanced the importance of academic advising based on its potential for creating positive relationships between students and institutional representatives (e.g., Ben-Avie et al., 2012; Drake, 2011; St. John, 2013). Ben-Avie et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study of the outcomes of a first-year experience seminar, examining success factors such as GPA, earned credit hours, and retention. They concluded, based on data gathered from 1,125 freshmen at Southern Connecticut State University, that participants were more likely to achieve successful outcomes if they had “formed healthy relationships with faculty, staff, and peers. In particular, until students make learning their own, they need to be engaged with faculty who value learning” (p. 149). O’Banion (1972, 1994, 2009) explained how valuable the system of academic advising is to an institution in that, “few student personnel functions occur as often or affect so many students” because the process occurs each semester for each student (p. 83).

Seminal research in higher education retention has established that students are more likely to be retained at a college or university if they interact with faculty in and

outside of the classroom (e.g., Tinto, 1975), integrate into the campus community academically and socially (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983), and become involved in their academic experience (Astin, 1984). Though different institution types implement academic advising using various models and institutional representatives, academic advisement is argued to be an ideal venue for maintaining valuable contact between students and faculty (e.g., Allen & Smith, 2008; Grites, 2013; Montag et al., 2012; Schreiner & Anderson, 2005).

Advising to Support Students of Color

Lau (2003) asserted that student retention has been an issue for American higher education since the 1980s, but that attrition is a greater problem for minority students. Although literature exists supporting academic advisement as a tool for facilitating student retention (e.g., Cannon, 2013; O'Banion, 1972, 1994, 2009), less literature is available on the effects of academic advising specifically as a tool for retaining of students of color (e.g., Fernandez, Davis, & Jenkins, 2017; Museus & Ravello, 2010). Though recent research has insisted a developmental advising approach is superior to the more transactional prescriptive approach (e.g., Crocker, Kahla, & Allen, 2014; Drake, 2011; Grites, 2013), others have posited that prescriptive advising is appropriate for some students, including students of color (e.g., Brown & Rivas, 1994; Schreiner & Anderson, 2005).

In their presentation of preliminary results of a campus academic advising redesign, Fernandez et al. (2017) discussed a cohort of 129 Black males that they evaluated after the dual approach to advising was implemented on their campus. Participants, who were also participating in a living-learning community at the study

institution, experienced a 4% decrease in the number of students placed on academic probation after the first year of the new, holistic advising model. Museus and Ravello (2010) conducted a qualitative study of 14 academic advisors and 31 undergraduate students of color including nine Asian students, nine Black students, and 13 Latina/o students. Their study included three institutions from various Carnegie classifications. Based on their findings, Museus and Ravello discussed specific methods for supporting students of color through academic advising including: (1) humanizing the educational experience, (2) using a multifaceted approach to support the student, and (3) using a proactive approach to advising. Rendón (1994) offered, from her qualitative study of 132 first-year college students at four different institution types, that students of color who feel validated in the campus community are more likely to succeed there. Later, Rendón (2006) concluded in an analysis of papers submitted to the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, the challenge for institutions seeking to more fully understand success for underserved students “is to do things quite differently in the face of a student population that defies homogeneity and seeks to realize an education that values them as capable knowers and views them as whole human beings” (p. 24).

Harding (2012) suggested that many students of color share similar experiences including having a lack of role models in the academic setting. Barker (2011) suggested that, although it is important to increase racial pluralism in the professoriate, White advisors can be effective in supporting students of color through academic advising. Harding added, “It is not necessary to look like the students we advise, but it is mandatory that we gain their respect and in turn give them the respect they deserve” (para. 12). Archambault (2015) recommended that new advisors develop cultural

competence by asking themselves reflective questions about their own assumptions of various student groups. She stated, “No advisor, regardless of experience, can fully prepare for every student who walks into an appointment. However, all can work toward understanding their own strengths and challenges with regard to cultural competence” (p. 199).

Advising Perceptions of Students of Color

In their book *Educating a Diverse Nation*, Conrad and Gasman (2015) explained that some Black and Hispanic students have elected to attend minority-serving institutions because of the institution’s ability to help students feel a sense of belonging and connection to other students. Rendón’s (1994) theory of student validation describes how institutional faculty can improve a student’s belief in his or her own ability to be successful in college through in-class and out-of-class interactions. She explained that students who do not identify with their peers feel alienated because they “have been forced to adapt to a new culture” on campus (Rendón, 1994, p. 34). Because academic advising is a consistent opportunity for institutional personnel to develop meaningful interactions with students (O’Banion, 1972, 1994, 2009), it may be a process that institutions of higher education can use to help students of color develop feelings of connectedness. Part of that connectedness may be identifying what students of color perceive as important in their advising experiences.

In his qualitative study of African American first-year student experiences, Floyd-Peoples (2016) interviewed 11 academic advisors, eight from HBCU’s and three from PWIs, to compare advising techniques used at the two institution types. Floyd-Peoples found that participants at both institution types reported the importance of improving a

student's self-efficacy and emphasizing student development. O'Neal (2013) conducted a qualitative study with the purpose of exploring Black students' perceptions of personal and institutional factors that contributed to their dissatisfaction and eventual withdrawal. The study involved nine Black undergraduate students at an urban two-year college. The campus headcount at the time of the study was 8,706 students, 82% of whom were Black. O'Neal reported that participants in his study revealed negative perceptions of the academic advising they had received at the institution, citing specifically being enrolled in courses that were unnecessary for their degree plan. This outcome suggests that students of color are primarily concerned, not with campus experiences as a member of a racial minority, but with the accuracy of the information that they are being given by advisors.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is framed by Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework. Deficit thinking "takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter schools without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). Harry and Klingner (2007) posited that the deficit model in education is "based on the normative development of students whose homes and communities have prepared them for schooling long before they enter school" (p. 16). Harper (2010) reframed the conversation of a racial educational achievement gap in his anti-deficit achievement framework by focusing on what factors enable the achievement of students of color.

Harper (2010) stated that, “most empirical studies amplify minority student failure and deficits instead of achievement” (p. 64). Citing a theory on poor minority student performance that postulates students of color are mismatched with institutions that have rigorous STEM courses, Harper countered that instead of focusing on causes of minority student failures, studies should examine what leads achievers to be successful. Harper’s (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework includes a list of suggested research questions designed to demonstrate how researchers might reframe deficit thinking to focus on student achievement. One example of the reframed research question, or “instead of query,” offered by Harper is to substitute the question “Why do so few Black male students enroll in college?” with the question “How were college aspirations cultivated among Black male undergraduates who are currently enrolled?” (p. 68). In speaking of his anti-deficit achievement framework, Harper advised, “instead of relying on existing theories, researchers using this framework should deliberately attempt to discover how some students of color have managed to succeed” (p. 68).

Harper went on to explain that the anti-deficit achievement framework is informed by theories in various fields including psychology, sociology, and education. His framework incorporates three stages of a student’s college achievement including his or her: (1) pre-college socialization and readiness, (2) college achievement, and (3) post-college persistence. In their qualitative study of factors affecting the academic success of 28 African American male students in the community college setting, Wood and Turner (2010) detailed these three stages, with examples of factors that influence each area. Regarding pre-college socialization and readiness, Wood and Turner gave the example of influential factors such as K-12 forces and the student’s family support. Examples given

of college achievement were out-of-class engagement and classroom interactions. Lastly, post-college persistence was described with the examples of attending graduate school or pursuing a career in research. Wood and Turner found that based on the perceptions of the participants, faculty could maintain positive relationships with Black male students by: (1) being friendly and caring, (2) proactively addressing students' academic progress, (3) listening to students' concerns, and (4) encouraging students to succeed.

Prior Research Using Harper's Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

Cooper and Hawkins (2016) explained that Harper's anti-deficit framework combats negative perceptions of Black male collegians by focusing on how these students overcome obstacles to their academic success. Cooper and Hawkins used a mixed-methods approach to study 57 Black male college athletes at an HBCU in the southeastern U.S., and found that the presence of a nurturing campus environment contributed to the participants' academic success. Fisher (2015) conducted a qualitative study to learn what types of experiences Black male collegians perceived to have made them successful. By analyzing the data gathered from 16 participants, he found that the most salient factors among participant responses were familial factors, engagement, and classroom experiences. In discussing the anti-deficit approach to scholarship, Fisher (2015) wrote, "Simply put, an anti-deficit scholarship poses different research questions, considers structural and institutional inequities, and ultimately studies a different subset of Black male collegians" (p. 8).

Olson (2015) used Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework in a qualitative study of 21 high-achieving, low socio-economic status college seniors of various races enrolled at the University of California Los Angeles. Using focus groups and one-on-one

interviews, Olson found that significant factors contributing to student academic success included family support and previous academic experiences. Likewise, Sarcedo (2014) used the anti-deficit achievement framework in his qualitative study of the factors leading Latino men to pursue college, and persist to graduation and advanced degrees. After interviewing 22 Latino men who had graduated from the undergraduate programs of three institutions in Southern California, Sarcedo found that family and peer support was salient in supporting academic achievement. Sarcedo concluded that supportive instructors and supplemental academic programs also assisted in supporting the graduation of Latino males.

Summary

This chapter focused on extant literature pertaining to the racial disparity evident in American higher education, as well as campus racial climate and how to support racial diversity on college campuses. Next, various implementation methods of the academic advisement process were discussed along with how academic advising might be used to better support students of color. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework was introduced along with prior research using Harper's framework.

Although Black and Hispanic students are enrolling in higher education in greater numbers than ever before, there is an achievement gap between these students and their White counterparts (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Some have attributed a root cause of this attrition to an unsupportive cultural climate (e.g., Gusa, 2010; Solórzano et al., 2000). Other researchers suggest it is necessary to confront Whiteness as the norm on campus to improve the campus racial climate for students in a racial minority (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2016). Academic advising has been established as a practice on campus that helps

support student retention (Cannon, 2013; O'Banion, 1972, 1994, 2009). However, there is still some debate as to which advising approach is best when working with students of color.

Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework acknowledges the racial disparity in college persistence and degree attainment, but elects to focus on factors associated with the success of students of color over those associated with the barriers or challenges that students of color face. Studies using the anti-deficit achievement framework have found that students of color are more likely to be academically successful when the campus environment is nurturing (Cooper & Hawkins, 2016), and students are supported by family, peers, or instructors (Olson, 2015; Sarcedo, 2014).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter III details the methodology and research design used for this qualitative study. The chapter will discuss: (1) restatement of the purpose of the study, (2) restatement of the research questions, (3) research design, (4) data collection processes, (5) data analysis processes, (6) trustworthiness of the study, and (7) context of the study and the researcher.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students of color related to faculty academic advisors at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Of specific interest in this study were the students' perceptions of and experiences with how faculty advisors' actions supported or hindered their persistence, and what the students identified as best practices for supporting students of color at this type of institution. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) defines persistence as "continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution — including one different from the institution of initial enrollment — in the fall semesters of a student's first and second year" (NSCRS, 2014, p. 7). This definition guided the discussion of persistence throughout this study.

Restatement of the Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this study:

1. How do students of color perceive faculty academic advising affects their persistence at a Predominantly White Institution?

2. What interactions with faculty advisors do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution identify as supportive of or hindering to their persistence?
3. What do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution recommend as best practices for faculty advisors to support their academic persistence?

Research Design

Establishing the Paradigm

Creswell (2014) states that a research design refers to the type of inquiry the researcher chooses to provide direction for the research procedures. Patton (2015) adds that a research design is a plan developed by the researcher to address the research questions and purpose of the study. This study was conducted using a qualitative research design. Qualitative inquiry is emergent in that the researcher “pursue(s) new paths of inquiry as they emerge” (Patton, 2015, p. 46). Qualitative research does not attempt to control variables, but allows the researcher to observe a phenomenon in a natural setting (Patton). Creswell (2014) and Patton (2015) explain that qualitative inquiry involves the collection of multiple sources of data, through tools such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information.

Creswell (2014) explains that a paradigm, or philosophical worldview, is a “general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study” (p. 6). Patton (2015) adds that a paradigm is “a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world” (p. 89). The five major paradigms in qualitative inquiry are positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism, and participatory action frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) explain that positivists view knowledge as a single reality that

can be measured and studied, and postpositivists view knowledge through the lens that there is a single reality, but it can never be fully understood because of hidden variables. Conversely, critical theorists subscribe to the idea that the world operates in a struggle between privilege and oppression (Lincoln et al.). Whereas Lincoln et al. describe constructivists as perceiving knowledge is socially and experientially based, they posit that participatory theorists believe reality is created in an individual's mind as the person participates in his or her larger surroundings.

The researcher perceives knowledge to be socially constructed and individual in nature, supporting the use of the social constructivist paradigm for the study. Creswell (2014) describes a social constructivist worldview as one that espouses the idea that “individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (p. 8). Denzin and Lincoln (2017) write, “Constructivists value transactional knowledge” (p. 98). They describe the four terms encompassed by a paradigm to include: (1) axiology, (2) epistemology, (3) ontology, and (4) methodology. Whereas axiology addresses a person's morality in the world, epistemology refers to how an individual knows the world (Denzin & Lincoln). Ontology questions the nature of reality and methodology focuses on how to gain knowledge about the world (Denzin & Lincoln). The constructivist axiom is one of a “participative inquirer,” and the constructivist's epistemology is transactional (Lincoln et al., 2018, p. 132). The constructivist ontology involves “local and specific constructed and co-constructed realities,” and their methodologies are largely qualitative (Lincoln et al., p. 110).

In explaining the social constructionist paradigm, Patton (2015) writes, “social constructionism asserts that things do not and cannot have essence because they are

defined interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships” (p. 121). The social constructivist paradigm was most appropriate for the study because the objective was to uncover what helped support the academic persistence of students of color at a PWI by gathering information on the perceptions of multiple individuals. The participants’ perspectives of their faculty advisors’ support for or hindrance of their academic persistence informed their reality as students of color at a PWI. The study was conducted through the lens of the researcher, that knowledge is socially constructed. The focus of the study was on student perceptions of the support they received from their assigned academic advisor while enrolled at the study institution, and what the students would identify as best practices in supporting students of color at a PWI.

Study Type

Denzin and Lincoln (2017) describe how a paradigm interacts with and informs a research design when they write, “Research strategies influence and anchor paradigms in specific empirical sites or in specific methodological practices, for example, making a case an object of study” (p. 21). Strategies of qualitative inquiry include phenomenology, ethnography, ground theory, narrative inquiry, and case study (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Creswell (2014) explains that phenomenological research involves a researcher describing “the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants,” while ethnography involves “the study of shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time” (p. 14). Grounded theory is described as a research design in which theory is developed based on data collected (Creswell). Narrative inquiry is

research involving methods from various disciplines that are used to study communications such as stories, folktales, and anecdotes (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) define case study research as “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in real-life settings and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 634).

Creswell (2014) defines a case study as “a qualitative design in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 241). A case study design is most appropriate for gathering a depth of understanding of a phenomenon, and the case study design is suitable when gathering multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011; Yin, 1024). Cases in case study research are “bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (Creswell, 2014, p. 241). Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest that binding a case study helps prevent the research from having too broad a scope. This study was bound by the perceptions of students of color at one public PWI in the southern region of the U.S. who held a junior or senior classification.

Stake (1995) refers to a study involving multiple cases as a collective case study. A collective or “multiple” case study design allows the researcher to “explore differences within and between cases” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548). Goddard (2010) adds to the explanation of a collective case study by instructing that a collective case study design is “used to undertake a close study of a number of cases that are linked together, either through a common issue or other similarities” (p. 163). He advances that the drawbacks of a collective case study design include a scope that is limited by timeline and budget, as

well as often requiring multiple researchers to gather data from the multiple cases.

Goddard adds that the benefits of a collective case study design include a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied and richness of data collected. This collective case study encompassed established characteristics of qualitative research in that it occurred in a natural setting, involved the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, and included multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2014).

Study Setting

The study setting was a public regional university located in the southern region of the U.S. The PWI offers mostly four-year degrees as well as 12 two-year programs, four master-level degrees, and one doctoral degree. The overall enrollment at the study institution grew from 4,995 in 2013 to 5,458 in 2017, and was comprised of roughly 59% female and 41% male students at that time (Fact Book, 2017). In 2017, the average American College Testing (ACT) score for the student body was 21. According to the institution's Fact Book (2017), the largest class size at the university in 2017 was that of freshmen who represented 32% of all students enrolled.

Reported in the 2017 Fact Book, the racial composition of the student body experienced changes in the ten years leading up to the study. The number of White students at the study institution decreased from 3,825, or 79% of the student body in 2008, to 3,442, or approximately 63%, in 2017. Conversely, the number of Hispanic students enrolled at the institution increased from 249 in 2008 to 547 in 2017, growing from 5% to 10% of the student body in that time. Notably, while the number of students who identify as Asian, International, and two or more races all increased at the study institution in the same time frame, the number of Black students actually decreased from

250, or 5%, in 2008 to 228, or 4%, in 2017. These shifts in racial composition demonstrate a diversification of the student body, but there is a paucity of campus resources to support the increased racial and cultural diversity of the students.

Any funding for programs or personnel to better support racial diversity on campus would likely not come from state allocations. The state where the study institution is located had been experiencing drastic cuts in state funding for higher education for more than three decades at the time of the study, making student retention and the subsequent maintenance of tuition revenue an urgent issue (Allen, 2012). Mortenson (2012) wrote that, based on the trends of reduction in state aid, public higher education is gradually being privatized. Mortenson (2012) went on to instruct that state fiscal support will cease to exist around the year 2059, depending on the state. The trend in declining state aid for public higher education in the state where the study institution is located has existed since the 1980s (Allen, 2012). The President of the study institution shared in 2016 that the university suffered a 16% decrease in state funding going into the 2016-2017 academic year (personal communication, Institution President, June 10, 2016). This amounted to more than a \$3 million loss for the institution.

Academic advising at the study institution was implemented using faculty academic advisors. Students were assigned a faculty advisor at admission, based on the academic major they selected. Students were not permitted to enroll themselves in courses for the upcoming semester until they earned 60 credit hours.

Participants and Sampling

The participants for this study were Black and Hispanic students at the study institution. These populations were the two largest minority groups at the study

institution and were perceived to be the best and most informed individuals to address the research questions for the study. The inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) students who were Black or Hispanic, (2) students who had 60 or more credit hours earned and held junior or senior status at the time of the study. Of the 5,458 students enrolled at the study institution in the fall of 2017, the population of students who met the inclusion criteria included 341 individuals: 142 Black students and 199 Hispanic students.

Whereas participants or a population is the larger group that a study is designed to learn about, a sample is the group who are actually studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This study examined the perceptions of the population of Black and Hispanic students at one PWI who have persisted to their junior year or beyond, using a sample of 12 students who were selected to interview. The participants in this study were selected using purposeful sampling because the goal was to “select cases that [would] be information-rich with respect to the purpose of the study” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, p. 178).

Patton (2015) explains that purposeful sampling is “...illuminative, that is, [cases] offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 46). Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2011) describe the goal of purposive sampling as the selection of individuals “who represent a particular group that is important to answering an evaluation question” (p. 409). Because students who belong to racial minority groups have a unique understanding of support systems in place at the study institution for students of color, they were the population from which participants were drawn. Purposeful sampling was used to select student participants who met the inclusion criteria for this study and who were deemed to be the best informed to address the purpose of the study.

Though Patton (2015) suggests 10 as a common sample size for qualitative research and Creswell (2014) proposes that many case studies use a sample of four to five cases, both insist that there is no set number required. Creswell (2014) explains that the goal of determining the proper sample size for a study is to reach saturation, or the point at which additional data provides no new insights. Although the goal of the study was to interview 10 students, interviews were conducted until saturation was attained. A total of 12 participants were purposefully selected for this study.

Data Collection Processes

Data collection is “the systematic approach to gathering and measuring information from a variety of sources to get a complete and accurate picture of an area of interest” (Zeini & Jadidi, 2010, p. 62). Interviews are conversations in which “power, gender, race, and class intersect” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 519). An interview is a “verbal exchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person, the interviewee” (Wiens & Tindall, 1995, p. 173). Interviews may be: (1) relatively structured, where the interviewer reads each question exactly as it is written, (2) relatively unstructured, where the interviewer cannot prepare questions ahead of time, and (3) semi-structured, which “allow[s] leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579).

Creswell (2014) postulates that when using a social constructivist paradigm, researchers “rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). While Creswell acknowledges a shortcoming of individual interviews as

allowing for information gathered to be filtered through the views of participants, this is useful in a study designed to gather participants' unique perspectives.

Creswell (2014) shares that the data collection process in qualitative research involves: (1) setting the boundaries for the study, (2) collecting information from multiple sources, and (3) establishing the protocol for recording information. The boundaries of this qualitative study were limited to the one public, regional university where the study took place. Data was collected from the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, institutional documents, field notes, and reflexive journaling. Creswell posits that an interview protocol helps to ensure that standard procedures are used in each interview.

According to Patton (2015), documents that can be used in qualitative studies include diary entries, letters, media items, crime reports, emails, and clinical files. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) suggest that existing program documents should be the first consideration for data collection because they are inexpensive, stable, and already gathered. Additional data sources in qualitative inquiry include reflexive journaling and field notes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) share that a reflexive journal is similar to a diary in which the researcher makes entries throughout the data collection process to reflect on each interview. Patton (2015) claims that field notes are an essential component of qualitative study, but conceded that there is "no universal prescription about the mechanics of and procedures for taking field notes" because of the wide variation of study settings (p. 387).

Field notes, which are used to describe the participants, their behavior, and the setting of the meeting (Merriam, 2009), were taken during participant interviews.

Additionally, both published and internal university documents were reviewed to better understand the persistence and graduation of students of color in comparison to White students at the study institution. Those data were compared to national averages for the rates of persistence and degree attainment of various racial and ethnic groups at similar institution types to provide context for the institutional data.

Finally, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the data collection process to inform the reader of the thought process followed throughout the study. This reflexive journaling provided an ongoing record of observations throughout the data collection process of the study. Moreover, remaining reflexive of the way information was being interpreted by the researcher allowed for transparency in the process of data analysis used in the study (Patton, 2015).

Students were eligible to participate in the qualitative study if they identified as Black or Hispanic on their university application materials, and had earned at least 60 credit hours at the time of the study. Students with junior-level classification or higher presumably had enough experience at the institution to be able to speak to what had led to their academic persistence and had several interactions with their academic advisors by that point in their academic program. Because distance education and part-time students may not experience the campus climate in the same way as face-to-face or full-time students, they were excluded from consideration for participation in the study.

Gaining access to participants begins with contacting a gatekeeper at the research site (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). Creswell (2014) describes gatekeepers as individuals at the research site who provide access to the research site and permission for the study to be done. After obtaining a list of students who fit the criteria for student participation, an

institutional gatekeeper sent an email to all qualifying students inviting them to participate in one-hour, face-to-face interviews. The email invitation was sent to all Black and Hispanic students at the study institution with 60 or more credit hours earned inviting them to participate in face-to-face interviews. The researcher did not have access to the list of students for the purpose of protecting their identities. Students were informed that participation was completely voluntary and would not affect their grades or academic standing at the university. Contact information was provided in the email with a timeframe to respond to the researcher in order to volunteer to participate. Students who responded were contacted individually to set up a time to meet with the researcher in a conference room on the university campus.

Yin (2014) posits that participants in a collective case study should be selected to demonstrate similarities as well as differences in their experiences of the same phenomenon. Although all participants were Black or Hispanic students who have earned 60 or more credit hours at the study institution, they have perceptions informed by unique experiences at the university. By inviting all students at the study institution who meet the inclusion criteria to participate in the study, participants represented a variety of academic departments and, subsequently, were assigned to various academic advisors.

Creswell (2014) advises that in qualitative research, data may be collected through public and private documents. To gather information about the population of students of color at the study institution, documents from the university published on national websites were reviewed as well as internal reports from the university's Associate Provost. These documents specifically informed the study regarding the proportion of students of color who were enrolled at the university as well as the number

of students who persisted to subsequent academic years, and those who attained degrees from the institution. This data was compared to national averages of the same data at other public four-year institutions to add context to the findings.

Data Analysis Processes

Data analysis in qualitative research involves the researcher making judgements about what information belongs in a category or theme (Patton, 2015). The data analysis process in qualitative research differs from that in quantitative studies in that analysis occurs throughout the study, synchronously with data collection, until no new information emerges (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) add that in qualitative research, so much data is collected that the researcher must winnow the information to determine what is most useful while omitting other pieces of data. To analyze the qualitative data collected for this collective case study, the researcher used a constant comparative method as well as open and axial coding.

Because the researcher is the primary instrument used for data collection in a qualitative study, data analysis for the case study began as information was being collected (Patton, 2015). Constant comparison refers to the ongoing process of comparing components within and between categories until closure is achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain the constant comparative method as the process of comparing new information to previously collected information in the same category. Creswell (2014) advances that using a constant comparative method of data analysis enables the qualitative researcher to identify recurring subjects in the data that arise and categorize them based on emergent themes. Interview data was analyzed as it

was collected and compared to previously conducted interviews to identify emerging categories.

Patton (2015) explains the process of coding data as organizing the information into categories that can then be labeled. Merriam (2009) describes open coding as the process of identifying various significant pieces of the data. During this phase of analysis, the researcher “err[ed] on the side of inclusion,” as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 346.), to ensure all potentially relevant categories were included. In order to preserve the accuracy of information gathered through the participant interviews, the sessions were audio recorded with participant permission. From there, interviews were transcribed and sent to the participants for confirmation and member checking. Emerging themes were then identified within the transcript using assorted colors of highlighter.

After utilizing open coding, the researcher used axial coding of the data to further focus emerging themes (Saldaña, 2009). Themes identified during open coding were entered into an excel spreadsheet and supplemented with direct quotes from the participant interviews. Because “real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce” and inclusion of that information makes the account more valid (Creswell, 2014, p. 202), field notes were also taken of evidence that ran counter to established themes. Creswell explains that the final step in data analysis involves interpreting findings to establish meaning of the results. After all of the information gathered was analyzed, findings were reached and meaning was established through the lens of the researcher.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the rigor of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and indicates the research is fair, balanced, and neutral (Patton, 2015). Qualitative analysis involves transferring data gathered into findings without a set formula (Patton, 2015). Because exact replication of qualitative research is not possible, Patton acknowledges, “No straight forward tests can be applied for reliability and validity” (p. 521). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four parallels to the concepts of reliability and validity used in quantitative research to be used in a qualitative approach including: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability.

Credibility is confidence that findings are accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2014) advises that member checking, or confirming the accuracy of participant responses, may occur in the form of follow-up interviews. Follow-up interviews were not conducted as they were not deemed necessary to clarify participant responses, but each participant was emailed his or her respective interview transcript to confirm, as suggested by Morse (2018). Credibility was also attained by triangulating multiple data sources “to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Denzin and Lincoln (2017) describe triangulation as “the application and combination of multiple (theoretical and methodological) approaches in the study of the same phenomenon” (p. 318). Data collected in participant interviews was compared to institutional documents to gain a better understanding of the data during analysis.

Dependability of research refers to the degree to which findings could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability can be attained in qualitative research by

“ensuring the process was logical, traceable, and documented” (Patton, 2015, p. 685). To support dependability of the research, a detailed account is provided of how data was coded and analyzed and appendices are included detailing participant recruitment, the interview protocol used to ensure standard procedures for each interview (Creswell, 2014), and the steps by which data was coded and analyzed are outlined. The context of the researcher is included for the reader in order to provide transparency regarding the lens through which data was interpreted and analyzed. By providing clear descriptions of the steps used throughout the research process, the reader will be able to follow the logic used by the researcher to reach the conclusions of the study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that confirmability in qualitative research refers to maintaining a degree of neutrality, and reaching findings based on the information provided by respondents as opposed to researcher bias. Merriam (2009) suggests the use of a reflexive journal to increase confirmability of a study. Rich, thick descriptions of participants’ narratives are provided and a reflexive journal was kept throughout the process of data collection and analysis. This journal outlined the thoughts and processes of the researcher to reveal any personal bias that may have been introduced to the study.

Transferability is the degree to which findings can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (2015) suggests the concept of transferability in qualitative research mirrors the idea of generalizability by providing adequate information to the reader on the “particulars” of the research (p. 710). Lincoln and Guba explain that qualitative findings are not intended to be applied to other contexts and that it is difficult to demonstrate external validity in a qualitative setting. However, qualitative researchers can provide readers with “sufficient information on the case studied such that

readers could establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case to which findings might be transferred” (Patton, p. 685). Patton recommends using “thick description with contextual details” throughout a qualitative study (p. 54). Rich, thick description “may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). Transferability was accomplished by thoroughly describing the context of the study and by detailing each step of the collective case study, including the process by which findings were reached.

Context of the Study and the Researcher

Context of the Study

The study setting was a regional university located in the southern United States with a headcount of approximately 5,000 students (Fact Book, 2017). The university was a PWI with a growing number of students of color. According to the study institution’s Fact Book (2017), 79% of the student body identified as White on application materials in 2008. That proportion steadily declined over the course of the next 10 years, with the proportion of White students in 2017 reportedly at 63%. The minority groups that grew the most in their representation within the student body in that same period were Hispanic students, who represented 5% of the student body in 2008 and over 10% in 2017, and two or more races, who were not recorded until 2011 but represented over 8% of the student body in 2017.

While the retention rate at the institution was below the average for public universities in the nation, the retention of students of color was particularly underwhelming. In 2014, the national one-year average for student retention at public, four-year institutions was 80% (NCES, 2015), while the one-year retention rate at the

study institution was under 64% (Varner, 2015). An internal retention report at the institution revealed that, of the 2013 cohort of incoming freshmen, 46% were retained for two years into the 2015 fall semester (Varner, 2016). Broken down by race, nearly 48% of White students were retained into their second fall semester, whereas for Black students, the percentage of the 2013 cohort retained after two years was 44, and the percentage for Hispanic students was 41 (Varner, 2016). Because the institution was facing budget shortfalls due to shrinking state aid, maintaining tuition revenue through student retention was essential.

Context of the Researcher

I was born and raised in Southern California. As such, I am most comfortable in diverse settings. I was always an overachiever in school, and California offered many academic programs for students at various levels of achievement. I graduated high school with guaranteed acceptance to a large research institution based on my grades and test scores. My family, who had pursued mostly vocational education, questioned why I would not enroll instead in a local community college to save money, but I was determined to attend the research institution, given its prestigious reputation. After beginning classes at the university, I became one of many high-achieving high school students to feel lost in the crowd. After struggling to adjust to the challenges of college life, I resigned myself to doing the minimum necessary to pass classes and move on from college. Leaving class one day, an instructor of mine asked about my plans for graduate school. In learning that I had none, he hired me as a student worker in his research laboratory and convinced me to apply myself to raising my grade point average for graduate school applications.

After earning a bachelor degree in psychology, I elected to pursue a master's degree in education. Attending a regional university in a different state for graduate school gave me insight into how different the college experience can be, based on the institution type and location. I worked in the Office of the Dean of Students while earning my master of education degree and realized I was interested in a career in higher education. I completed my master's degree and applied for a position as a program coordinator at the same institution. After 10 years working in various positions at the institution from which I received my graduate degree, I decided to pursue a doctorate degree in higher education to afford myself the opportunity to apply for positions with increased levels of responsibility and to equip myself with the skillset necessary to affect meaningful change at the university.

In my current position as the Coordinator for Academic Advising and Retention Management, I have the opportunity and privilege to interact daily with students as an academic advisor. I specifically work with students who did not meet the academic requirements for admission to the university but were admitted under the institution's alternative admissions policy. This gives me the experience of working with students who share some of the same feelings I had of uncertainty and discomfort in the university setting. Additionally, I work with many students who have the added burden of attending an institution in which very few of their classmates look like them or share their culture. Having grown up in a more racially diverse setting, I now understand that there are systemic challenges that these students face while others enjoy privileges because they belong to the ethnic majority. It is important for me to note that this sentiment is in no way intended to perpetuate a White savior narrative, but is to acknowledge the paucity of

resources available for our students of color and to support research that recognizes their voices in the continual improvement of student services.

As an employee at the study institution, I am in a position to initiate changes in university practice that could help students of color develop positive relationships with institutional representatives and increase their likelihood of graduation. My interest in how academic advising might be used as a tool for improving student retention stems from the fact that my own interactions with a single university representative changed my entire educational trajectory. Because students of color are empirically less likely to persist and graduate at the study institution, I aim to develop a better understanding of how academic advisors can the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, the researcher's field notes, a reflexive journal, and institutional documents support that population of students. Though I am not a person of color, this research interests me because of its potential to reveal how I, and other higher education practitioners at a PWI, can better support the academic persistence of the students of color enrolled at the institution.

Summary

In order to better understand the advising experiences that Black and Hispanic students perceive to have supported their academic persistence, a qualitative collective case study, conducted through the lens of the constructivist paradigm, was used to explore one public regional university in the southern region of the United States. Participants were purposefully selected from Black and Hispanic students at the institution with at least 60 credit hours to ensure multiple interactions between the students and their academic advisors. Data was collected through the lens of the

researcher, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, internal and public documents, reflexive journaling, and field notes. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method as well as open and axial coding. Trustworthiness of the research was gained through the implementation of reflexive journaling, member checking, and the use of rich, thick descriptions to allow the reader to determine the degree to which the study findings apply to their own institutional settings. Chapter IV will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents: (1) summary of the research design, (2) data collection processes, (3) data analysis processes, (4) study institution and participant profiles, and (5) findings. The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students of color related to faculty academic advisors at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Of specific interest in this study were the students' perceptions of and experiences with how faculty advisors' actions supported or hindered their persistence, and what the students identified as best practices for supporting students of color at this type of institution. The following three research questions guided this study:

1. How do students of color perceive faculty academic advising affects their persistence at a Predominantly White Institution?
2. What interactions with faculty advisors do students of color identify as supportive of or hindering to their persistence?
3. What do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution recommend as best practices for faculty advisors to support their academic persistence?

Summary of the Research Design

This qualitative study employed a collective case study design, and was conducted through a constructivist lens. A collective case study occurs in a natural setting, includes multiple sources of data, and involves the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2014). Data for this study was collected through the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, the researcher's field notes, a reflexive journal, and institutional documents.

Data Collection Processes

After receiving approval to conduct the study from the Texas Tech University Human Research Protection Program as well as the institutional review board at the study institution (see Appendices A and B), data collection for the study began. The first step was to recruit participants. In order to recruit potential participants at the study institution, a gatekeeper was used. A gatekeeper in a research study is a person who provides the researcher with access to the research site (Creswell, 2014). The gatekeeper for this study was the Dean of Students at the study institution, chosen for her access to all enrolled students as well as her involvement in student services and subsequent familiarity with students. She was approached by the researcher via email and sent the Gatekeeper Recruitment Script that included an introduction to the study and contact information if she had any questions (see Appendix C). The gatekeeper responded via email, agreeing to participate in the study, and was sent the Participant Recruitment Script (see Appendix D) that provided information about the study, and included the inclusion criteria for potential participants. Inclusion criteria for students to participate in this study included: (1) identifying as Black or Hispanic on institutional records, and (2) having earned 60 credit hours or more.

The gatekeeper reported that she sent the recruitment email and information sheet for the study to 401 students who she identified as meeting the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. Of the population of students invited to participate in the study, 20 students responded to the email expressing interest in participating. Although students were directed to contact the researcher to participate in the study, one student responded to the gatekeeper, who then forwarded the student's email to the researcher. Of the 20

students who responded to the researcher with interest in participating in the study, 13 students followed through with scheduling an interview. The majority of participants completed face-to-face meetings for interviews, but one interview was completed by phone at the request of the participant.

To schedule participant interviews, the researcher communicated with the students through the preferred contact method identified by the student in their response to the recruitment email. After the students provided a time that was most convenient for them to meet, the researcher reserved a room on campus through the institution's online room reservation form. The students were then each emailed a confirmation with the scheduled time and location for their respective meeting. The semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted at the study institution in one of the classroom buildings, commonly frequented by students as well as faculty, so that it was a neutral location for the researcher and participant. The room reservation process occurred with eight participants, while three participants requested to be interviewed in the researcher's office, located in the same campus building as the rooms in which the other participants were interviewed. Of the 12 interviews, one was conducted by telephone at the request of the participant due to her commute to campus and her being at home for the summer semester when the interviews took place. A conference room within the building was the site for four of the interviews, and a classroom was used as the site for another four interviews.

Each interview began with the researcher greeting and thanking the participant, then providing the informed consent form (see Appendix E) and offering clarification on any participant questions. All of the participants provided informed consent at the time

of their interview except for one participant who emailed the researcher a signed and scanned copy prior to her scheduled phone interview. Following the collection of informed consent, the interview protocol was followed (see Appendix F). Each participant was reminded that his or her participation was voluntary and that they could stop the interview at any time. Each participant was asked permission to record the interview and all participants agreed.

Throughout the semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked the interview questions in the same order, unless the participant answered multiple questions within the same response (Brinkmann, 2018). Following a semi-structured interview format, the researcher asked follow-up questions for clarification, and allowed the participant leeway to expand on whatever he or she deemed important at that time (Brinkmann, 2018; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). As interview questions were asked, field notes were taken to provide rich descriptions and document the context in which interview responses were given (Patton, 2015). Following the interview, participants were reminded that they would be given a pseudonym by the researcher if they did not elect to choose one themselves, and would be sent the interview transcript to review and confirm. Only one participant, Frank, requested to select his own pseudonym. All others were chosen by the researcher.

Although all interviews followed the same protocol, interviews varied in length from approximately 11 to 37 minutes, depending on the level of detailed offered by the participants. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked if they had any additional information that they would like to add based on their perception that it was pertinent to the conversation. Most expressed that they perceived the interview questions

to have addressed all relevant topics, but one participant wanted to add input after the audio recorder was turned off. At that point, the researcher restarted the recording with the participant's permission and resumed taking notes. Another participant asked about the researcher's reasoning for conducting the study. The researcher discussed the purpose and significance of the study until the participant appeared satisfied with the information given. After all interviews were complete and participant questions were answered, interviews were transcribed by the researcher and sent to the participants within seven days of each interview as a means of member checking to ensure accuracy of the data (Creswell, 2014). Only two participants responded, and both gave their approval of their respective transcript. There was one student whose interview was excluded from the study after the researcher learned that he reported having a junior classification based on his time at the study institution, but had completed only 58 credit hours of college coursework.

Field notes were taken during all 12 interviews, and were used to record the researcher's observations and thoughts including the participants' demeanor and behavior, as well as notes on the setting in which the interview took place (Merriam, 2009). In addition to field notes being recorded, a reflexive journal was kept, starting with the review board application process and continuing to the conclusion of data analysis, in order to detail the researcher's understanding and thoughts of the data gathered. The reflexive journal was used to disclose any bias on the part of the researcher in data interpretation (Merriam, 2009). Following each interview, reflections on interactions with each participant were journaled in order to provide context for the analysis and subsequent findings based on the data collected.

Additional data was collected from institutional documents including University student organization information; the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Human Resources Data Report; the Growth and Retention Strategic Initiatives report; and Understanding Our Students: Evidence Booklet. Because several participants referenced culturally-based student organizations on campus, the researcher contacted the Office of the Dean of Students about information on any Hispanic or Black student organizations. The researcher was given approval to review the historical files for the Black Student Association and Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) on campus, including the organizational charters and by-laws. The student organization files were taken to the researcher's office to read through and make copies. Institutional reports were printed from online resources to be reviewed in detail.

Data Analysis Processes

Within qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument used for data collection. As such, data analysis began as information was being collected (Patton, 2015). During the participant interviews, an audio recording was created and notes were taken of the interview setting and participant demeanor. After each participant interview, the related audio recording was transcribed by the researcher, along with researcher's field notes. All data was analyzed by the researcher manually without the use of computer analysis software. Each interview and related field notes was transcribed within seven days of meeting with the participant.

Each new interview was interpreted and compared to the others during the transcription process using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). New data collected through interviews, field notes, and institutional reports was

compared to the data previously collected. Once all interviews and field notes were transcribed, the documents were read over several times to ensure thorough familiarity with the data. In comparing the data, similarities and differences were recorded (Merriam, 2009). These multiple data sources were triangulated in order to increase the credibility of the study (Patton, 2015). Participants' interview responses were compared to the researcher's observations during the interview and to institutional documents related to student cultural organizations. Triangulation of data sources was used to cross-check information gathered to contribute to the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam, 2009).

As the researcher read through hard copies of each interview, open coding was used to identify significant pieces of data by highlighting keywords in the interview transcripts (Merriam, 2009). Key words and phrases were then written by hand in the margins of the documents, then entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for organization and storage. Data was further focus into specific categories using axial coding (Saldaña, 2009). The researcher handwrote notes on a notepad of redundancies found in the data. Tallies were made of the number of times topics were mentioned within an interview as well as between interviews. Categories were developed and redeveloped as repetition emerged. To focus categories, additional sheets were added to the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for storage and to facilitate retrieval of the information. A page was created with all participants' responses arranged by interview question. Interview responses were again reviewed for similarities and differences (Merriam, 2009).

From there, the researcher was able to synthesize data into themes with key phrases supporting each theme (Saldaña, 2009). Finally, a page was created within the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet identifying themes in the participants' perceptions and reported experiences with academic advisors at the study institution, and substantiated with specific quotes supporting each focused theme. Data was arranged into an outline with themes that emerged in response to each research question.

Study Institution and Participant Profiles

Study Institution Profile

The study setting was a public, regional university located in the southern region of the U.S. The university offers predominantly baccalaureate degrees, along with 12 minor options, and one doctoral-level program. The university is a predominantly White institution (PWI), with 63% of the student body identifying as such in 2017 (Fact book, 2017). That same year, the institutional Fact Book reported that Black students comprised 4% of the student body, while Hispanic students accounted for 10% of the students. The one-year retention rate for incoming freshmen in 2017 was 66%, and the graduation rate for bachelor degree-seeking students was 31% after six years (IPEDS, 2018). The institution used a faculty advising model, assigning academic advisors based on the student's selected major.

Information in institutional reports indicated students of color were unlikely to have a faculty advisor with a similar ethnic or racial background. The IPEDS Human Resources Data Report detailed the demographics of full-time faculty at the institution in the 2017 who made up the population of potential academic advisors in the 2017-2018 academic year. Out of 207 faculty advisors, five were Hispanic and one was African

American. Combined, Hispanic and Black faculty members accounted for fewer than 3% of the academic advisors at the study institution.

The Growth and Retention Strategic Initiatives report was reviewed along with Understanding Our Students: Evidence Booklet. Both reports were written by the study institution's Associate Provost in response to the university's strategic planning initiatives. These reports identified areas of improvement based on analysis of the National Student Survey of Engagement (NSSE) administered to freshmen and senior-level students on the campus in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014. The Associate Provost explained a primary objective in the university's strategic plan for 2012 to 2017 was to "increase student success and retention" (Varner, 2016). Specifically, Varner (2015) discussed a focus on improving student-faculty interaction to accomplish that strategic goal. This information indicates that the study institution had identified academic advising as an institutional priority during an internal assessment process.

Participant Profiles

The 12 participants in this study ranged in age from 20 to 29, and represented nine different academic majors. Their profiles follow.

Anna is a Hispanic female who was 20 years old at the time of the study. Anna shared that she attended a predominantly White high school. She had been at the study institution for three years, starting in 2016. Anna was a Business Management major who described her academic performance before college as "A plus", explaining that she had always been hard working when it came to academics. She was active in a volunteer organization at the study institution aimed at helping incoming students transition to the university, and she was also an officer in the institution's student organization for

Hispanic leaders. Anna lived with her older sister, who also attended the study institution. Anna came in for her interview after helping at an all-day student event.

Bennett was 23 years old at the time of the study. Bennett shared that the racial composition of his high school was the same as the study institution in that there were “more Whites.” He is a Black male who had attended the study institution for four years on an athletic scholarship. Bennett was an Exercise Science major who shared that in high school, he was an “above average student” when he applied himself. He was finishing the final semester of his bachelor program at the time of his interview. Bennett was returning to the institution to earn graduate credits in the fall of 2018 to use his last year of athletic eligibility. Bennett was the last student to be interviewed, but said he had received the email invitation to participate and had planned to come in, but was also reminded by a friend of his who had completed an interview.

Cynthia was 20 years old at the time of the study and is a female who identified as Black and Hispanic. She shared that she attended a high school with approximately the same racial composition as the study institution. Cynthia was a junior Music Therapy major with a “very good” academic record before college, leading her to be at the study institution on an academic scholarship. She is the oldest of six children and was the only student interviewed whose advisor was also a person of color, though still a different ethnicity than her own.

Darius was 21 years old and identified as Black African American. He graduated from a high school, with what he described as few people of color, with a 4.0 grade point average (GPA). He had been at the study institution for three years at the time of the interview. Darius was a student-athlete majoring in Health Information Management.

He came to the study institution on an athletic scholarship. Darius shared that his brother attended an HBCU in the same state as the study institution.

Frank was a 23-year old Black male who attended the study institution for the 2013-2014 school year before transferring to another university. Frank returned to the study institution in 2017. He shared that the racial composition of his high school was “about the same” as the predominantly White study institution. Frank was a student-athlete majoring in Exercise Science. He shivered through his interview, sharing that he had come straight from sitting in an ice bath in athletic training.

Hayden was a 23-year old senior at the study institution. He was majoring in Business Management and identified as Black African American. Hayden described his prior academic performance as “kinda bad” in high school, which led him to attend a junior college before coming to the study institution on an athletic scholarship. He was a first-generation college student who described his high school as “all Black.” Despite persisting within the same major, Hayden was working with his second faculty academic advisor after his first left the university.

Hudson is a Black male who was 23 years old at the time of the study. He attended a high school where the majority of the student body was Black or Hispanic. Hudson was a senior Business Marketing major who came to the study institution on an athletic scholarship, but was not participating in football in the upcoming school year. He described his academic performance before college as “mediocre” and he had been at the institution for five years while pursuing his bachelor degree. He was a first generation college student.

Lainey was a 29-year old mother and wife who identified as Hispanic, although she shared that she was perceived as White. She was the only participant who shared that she was home-schooled through high school. Lainey was a senior Pharmacy major at the study institution, but the only participant who had earned a bachelor degree from another institution. Lainey's interview was conducted by phone, at her request. She shared that she was "an A/B student" before college.

Orlando was a senior Health and Physical Education major. He is an African American male who was 22 years old at the time of the study. Orlando was at the study institution on an athletic scholarship after earning about a 3.0 GPA at his high school that was "more diverse" than the study institution. As a prospective student, he was aware that the study institution was predominantly White and did not want to attend the university. Orlando ultimately came to the study institution at his parents' urging. His interview was the shortest as he answered each interview question, but expanded very little on his responses.

Paige was a 20-year old Hispanic female. She was a junior Mass Communication major who had graduated from an "all Hispanic" high school with a 3.7 GPA and honors. Paige's parents were educated in Mexico. She changed academic majors after a poor advising experience with her first assigned faculty advisor. Paige was an active volunteer in multiple campus organizations and a scholarship recipient through one of those organizations.

Raquel is a Black female who was 21 years old at the time of the study. She was a senior Interdisciplinary Studies major. Raquel attended four different high schools of various racial compositions before coming to the study institution and was the only

participant who had not had her advisor as an instructor in class. She returned to the study institution after sitting out a semester following an academic suspension.

Trey was a 23-year old father who identified as Black African American. He attended a high school where there were “not very many White kids.” Trey was a senior Communication Arts major and transferred to the study institution to play football. He had completed two semesters at the university at the time of his interview. Trey was a first-generation college student who did not have to apply himself academically in high school, but shared that athletics allowed him to simply attend class and “get a free grade for it.”

Findings

Advising Impact on Persistence

Research question one explored how students of color perceived faculty academic advising affected their persistence at the study institution. The analysis of the data collected to address this research question produced the following four themes: (1) advisor effects on student persistence may be limited, (2) there are differences between an assigned advisor and a campus mentor, (3) reluctance to disclose personal information to an advisor, and (4) a reliance on self.

Advisor effects on student persistence may be limited. Of the 12 participants, half of them perceived that their advisor did not affect their academic persistence. Hayden stated that he perceived his college aspirations were more impactful than the advisement he received from his faculty advisor. He stated:

I could say... [faculty advising] really doesn't [affect my persistence], for real. I don't think, at least. Because, I don't know, if I'm here for one goal, and I'm

gonna accomplish that goal, you know. If I have multiple faculty advisors, you know what I'm saying, messing me up, then it's a problem.

Paige held similar perceptions about her faculty advisor to Hayden. She shared:

I wouldn't say [my faculty advisor] necessarily does [affect my persistence]. Just because I have my own drive to finish college. So, I think even, even if I didn't have a good advisor, I would try to find a better advisor. But he's a pretty good advisor.

Frank shared his perception that he and his faculty advisor had only superficial discussions about enrollment. He shared, "I feel like my academic advisor knows what I need to do and he knows that I know what I need to do." Lainey agreed with Frank in her directness when speaking of how her faculty academic advisor does not affect her persistence. She stated, "I don't think [my academic advisor] affects if I continue at [the study institution] or not." Raquel also relayed her perception that her faculty advisor was ineffective in her academic persistence. She shared, "I don't think [my faculty advisor] does [affect my persistence]. Yeah. I think I just want to finish, myself. Like, it's in my brain to finish." Orlando simply stated, "I don't think [my academic advisor] really affects too much on what I have going on academically."

The other half of the participants shared insights that they viewed academic advising as an important role in their persistence. Anna shared, "I think [academic advising] plays a great deal [of a role in my persistence]. I was very lucky to have such a great advisor, especially 'cause she did help me pick certain classes and kind of decide on [what] I wanted to do." Hudson also discussed his views of his faculty advisor, and alluded to how an advisor could affect student persistence. He went on to say, "It can

influence if, you know, I was to stay or leave just based on me feeling that-- me feeling like they never really cared.”

For some of the participants, advisors’ impact on their persistence related specifically to the support the advisor provided. Bennett shared his perceptions that faculty advisors can be helpful in selecting appropriate courses for student-athletes and enrolling students when there are still seats available in the classes to work around the athletic schedule. He went on to say, “Us athletes need a lot of help with that.” Cynthia also spoke about the importance of getting guidance from her faculty advisor to stay on track with her degree plan, especially given other job responsibilities that faculty advisors have. She spoke specifically about being a priority for an advisor who is very busy with other responsibilities. Cynthia shared:

I think [faculty advisors] affect a lot [relative to student persistence] ‘cause... [my advisor], she’s very busy, but in the sense that she takes on a lot of tasks and she gets them done. Which is always surprising ‘cause she’s teaching and she’s on [a professional board for the major]. So, she does a lot. And she’s also very involved in our degree making plans.

Trey echoed Cynthia’s perception that an advisor’s availability influenced his persistence. He said, “I could come in [to my advisor’s office] and talk to him at all times. I’m getting ready to graduate, so I go in there a lot, just to make sure I’m on the right path.” Taking a different direction than the other participants, Darius explained his thoughts of the importance of a faculty advisor being enthusiastic about their respective academic programs to keep student majors motivated to continue in the degree program:

If [my faculty advisor] would have talked negative about [the academic program], I would have tried to find a different major or something like that. But [my faculty advisor] has always been positive about [the major], saying how good it is and fun and how much success her students have had coming from it.

There are differences between an assigned advisor and a campus mentor.

Despite the fact that 50% of the participants did not perceive their faculty academic advisor to be instrumental in their persistence, every participant identified a person on campus who they viewed as a mentor. All of the participants had an advisor of a different race at the time of the study. In the fall 2017 semester, 0.5% of the 201 faculty advisors at the study institution were Black, and 2.5% of faculty advisors were Hispanic (Institutional Research Specialist, personal communication, August 22, 2018). Of the seven male participants, four of them shared that the person they viewed as a mentor on campus was another male of the same race. Of the five female participants, three specifically named another female on campus.

For several of the student athletes, the person they perceived to be their mentor was one of their coaches. Orlando, a student athlete, clearly saw his coaches as important to his persistence at the study institution. He explained that the reason he saw his coaches as important to his persistence was “Cause I’m around them the most and they always try to tell you right from wrong in the real world and in school. So, it’s kinda like having a dad.” Hayden and Bennett also mentioned a coach as a helpful mentor. Bennett shared that his coach advised him on how to use his athletic eligibility to get the greatest number of college credits possible. In addition to what was stated by Orlando, Hayden, and Bennett about their coaches, Darius added additional reasons for approaching his

coaches for advice. He said, “All the coaches [are people I see as mentors]. I mean, they know a lot and they’re pretty outgoing. Like, they’re still young, but they’re older.”

While Trey also shared that he perceived a coach to be his mentor, he was the only student athlete who referred to a coach who was not of the same race.

Some of the other participants identified a faculty member who they grew to view as a mentor. Anna, Cynthia, Lainey, Hudson, and Raquel all spoke of faculty members on campus with whom they perceived to have developed closer relationships with than their assigned faculty advisors. For Anna and Raquel, that person was another female on campus. While Anna met the faculty person whom she saw as a mentor in a required freshmen-level course, Cynthia perceived a faculty person within her academic major as her mentor. Lainey shared that she thought of several of her major instructors as mentors because she aspired to be like them. Hudson and Raquel both identified an instructor from a success skills course as one of their campus mentors. Frank described how he came to develop a closeness with one of his faculty members of the same race by approaching him after class:

When I was wild, I was young, I was just loud, arrogant. And then when I came back [to the study institution after transferring elsewhere], [this faculty member] was so shocked that I went through so much and that I changed and kinda grew up. And that’s-- so I think that’s what brought us together is ‘cause he’s-- that mentor, like, “Ok, you, you learned some stuff. Now let’s put it all together.”

Frank shared that he grew closer to the instructor he considered his mentor by talking about life and things outside of classes. Paige stated that the person she viewed as a mentor was the female faculty sponsor for her student organization.

Reluctance to disclose personal information to an advisor. The majority of the participants shared that they did not discuss personal issues with their faculty advisor as they did not perceive those discussions as appropriate for the type of relationship they had. Darius went on to explain his reason for this:

I mean, if [faculty advisors] ask a couple questions I'll answer, but I won't just willingly tell them information that has nothing to do with school. I don't know. I just never have. I don't know. I never felt the need to. Well, I mean, if I felt like I did need to, I feel like I could tell them, but I haven't really felt the need to tell them anything... outside of school.

Frank agreed with the input of Darius in that he did not share personal information with his faculty advisor. He said, "This [interview] is actually the first time I've actually gotten personal, openly with, you know, somebody I don't know. Just 'cause you know, you asked me to." Hayden, Hudson, Orlando, and Raquel were all very direct in stating that they did not discuss any personal information with their faculty advisor.

Paige, Cynthia, and Anna shared that they had a positive relationship with their faculty advisor, but only conversed with their advisor about academic issues. Lainey expanded on that sentiment after explaining that she respected her faculty advisor, but that she would not discuss anything personal with him. She said, "I'd say [I only talk to my advisor about things] related to school. Like, just, if I'm having a problem or something like that in school, but nothing outside of that."

Of all the participants, Bennett and Trey were the only two who did disclose personal information to their advisors. Bennett relayed that he thought his advisor responded more to him once he started communicating more with her. He said, "I've

seen the difference on how she responds to me, how she talks to me, and the help she gives if I ask.” Trey discussed that he began sharing information when his advisor asked questions about his past experiences and high school performance. Trey went on to explain that he had a friendly relationship with his advisor, and that the two were able to joke with each other in and out of the classroom. He shared:

He knows a lot about me. Within, like, the first week, he asked a lot of questions.

He knows a lot about my past, why I left my previous college I was at. Kind of same things you asked about-- high school, how my academics was there, so he knows a lot about past experiences I’ve had with school and everything.

Although all of the participants shared that their advisor was a different race or ethnicity, they also all insisted that race did not influence the relationship that they shared with their advisors.

A reliance on self. The participants shared personal characteristics that they perceived to have helped them persist in college. Although four of the participants attributed outside supports that contributed to their persistence, eight of the participants identified one of their own qualities that led them to continue college from one year to the next. Frank attributed his persistence to his dedication, saying, “When I set my mind to something, I’m very optimistic... I try not to let the external negativity around me affect that.” Cynthia echoed a reliance on her own dedication when she shared that she does not like to fail. She mentioned that her organizational skills and self-discipline were positive contributing factors to her success in college. Raquel alluded to her academic resilience when facing a setback. She shared that she “wanted to finish [college]”, but that she was placed on academic probation after a difficult semester and that challenge

“made [me] want to finish more.” Bennett also shared information about his own resilience. He stated, “I’ve always been an independent student, especially when things get tough.” Trey echoed Bennett’s reliance on himself to persist in college. He shared that his persistence stemmed from:

Just not giving up. Just to have that attitude, that mentality, that once you start something, you have to finish. That’s kind of my drive. And I’ve been in school this long, so it would be kind of pointless to stop and turn around now and not finish and go all the way through.

Bennett spoke of having his faculty advisor as an instructor in class, and his awareness that he would need to pass the course in order to graduate. He stated, “I knew that I had to -- if I’m gonna graduate anything, this is teacher who I got to get past.” Like Bennett, Paige attributed her persistence to her own “perseverance and strength”, and Lainey shared that focusing on her goal of graduating helped her persist. She said simply, “I knew where I wanted to be.” Darius attributed his academic success to his innate personality traits. He shared that his academic success came from a willingness to ask questions and from:

...being a people person. Being able to talk to people because, in class, you have to have people who can help you on homework, help you understand the stuff that you can’t understand. They can understand and you just work together. It makes for [a] better class.

Hayden combined personal determination with familial support when he spoke of being motivated to persist in college because of the struggles his parents had faced due to limited opportunities. For the other three participants, two shared that they perceived

their academic persistence to be the result of family support, and the last, Orlando, shared that being on the university's football team was what has kept him in school.

Advising Experiences that Support or Hinder Student Persistence

Research question two explored which interactions with faculty advisors the participants perceived to be supportive of or hindering to their persistence. The analysis of the data collected to address this research question produced the following themes: (1) poor advising experiences may lead to major changes, and (2) desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable.

Poor advising experiences may lead to major changes. Hudson perceived that a student would consider leaving an institution if he or she perceived an advisor did not “care” about his or her success. Some of the participants, all students of color, described how their faculty advisors or the treatment they experienced on campus had been more of a hindrance to their academic success than a supportive factor, and explained how they were able to persevere. Anna shared a story of a friend at the university who changed majors when she thought her advisor was not knowledgeable about university policies. She explained that her friend was trying to register for classes during the first week of the enrollment period, as is permitted for student workers on campus, and went on to explain what happened:

The professor emailed back that he never heard of such of a policy and [she] was gonna have to wait. She was wanting certain classes that we know get filled up pretty quick and she was like, “I really want these classes” ‘cause she [had been] a concurrent student, so she had some classes done. And so, she could finish early.

So she didn't want to have to wait on those gen eds. So she emailed him back and

showed him the policy and everything and he was like, “Why don’t you just wait ‘til your time?” because she was a freshman and so she was going to have to wait for that freshman date, the very last one. And she was just like, didn’t want to argue with him and she was like, “Fine, I’ll just leave it at that.” But she showed me and I was like, “I’m sorry. I don’t know what else you want me to do. I probably can’t do anything much.” Um, but yeah, she kind of felt like he was really out-of-date with the policies, which really bothered her.

Anna shared that this experience motivated to her friend to seek out a more knowledgeable advisor. Likewise, Raquel spoke of the uncertainty of her academic program coming from a strained relationship with her faculty advisor when she changed majors to pursue Interdisciplinary Studies. She said that her new faculty advisor, “sent me away. He was like, ‘You should do pre-law or Political Science’ and then... I didn’t want to do those.” Raquel shared that she does not think she received any academic support from her faculty advisor.

Another example of a faculty advisor being perceived as a hindrance to academic persistence was shared by Paige. She explained that her faculty advisor assumed she was fluent in Spanish because of her ethnicity, and did not take her past experiences as a student of color into consideration. Paige ended up changing to another major because of the interaction with her faculty advisor. She shared her experience:

I guess [my advisor] was frustrated that I couldn’t succeed in math or something? I don’t know. And she turned to me when we were picking my course schedule and she was like, “Why don’t you just major in Spanish? You know Spanish,

right?” And I was so mad I couldn’t even lie. I was like, “Yeah, I know Spanish.”

Darius had a similar experience as Paige with his faculty advisor. He described an interaction in which his first assigned advisor encouraged him to change majors. When his advisor told him the major he initially wanted to pursue would be too difficult for him, he believed her and changed majors. He shared:

I trusted [my advisor’s] opinion that [the academic major] was gonna be hard.

But then again, I had two teammates who just graduated [with that major] and that played football, so I kind of feel like I could have did it because they did it.

Darius also mentioned that he would change majors if he perceived his faculty academic advisor was negative about the academic program of study. He shared that he felt the need to prove himself to his advisor as a Black male. Although Bennett did not share about a major change, he spoke of race being a strain on his relationship with his faculty advisor who is White. He said, “I felt like there’s always going to be that judgement” from his faculty advisor as a student of color.

Desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable.

Participants mentioned knowledgeability as a desirable trait in a faculty advisor. Hayden shared that his second advisor had been more helpful than the original advisor to whom he was assigned with respect to knowing how to balance his coursework with his schedule as a student-athlete. He stated:

Since [my new advisor] has been my academic advisor, he set me up. He set me up so I can pass and, you know, get the [classes] that I need. So, I can say he’s helped me out a lot since I’ve been here... but my first advisor, he actually kinda-

- I don't know, we had mixed-- miscommunications, so it kinda messed my credits up.

Bennett shared his frustration that his academic advisor did not inform him that he could begin taking graduate courses while he used his last year of athletic eligibility. He summed up the oversight by saying, "No one told me." Like Bennett, Cynthia reportedly valued knowledgeability in an academic advisor. She shared that her advisor's knowledge of her degree plan was something that she appreciated by saying:

I go to her a lot because I always have questions about [my academic major] but she's always ready to help you. If you have any questions, like, which classes to take and so forth. And so, thanks to her, I have, like, my next three years planned out already.

Orlando, similar to Cynthia, also relied on his faculty advisor's knowledge. He shared an example of how he relied on his faculty academic advisor for insights on what courses to take and the required rigor of potential courses. He shared:

For instance, my GPA was getting low, so I went in [to my advisor's office] and talked to him and he was helping me with classes I should take or telling me what classes I needed to take over again and that maybe I should really try and it's not a blow-off class.

When participants shared positive examples of how their faculty advisors supported their academic persistence, they used words like *open*, *trust*, and *respect*. Trey, the only participant who reported that he shared personal information with his assigned faculty advisor, perceived his relationship with his advisor was positive. He went on to share:

[My advisor] is very open about if we need someone to talk to, like someone to reach out to that they could come to him and talk to him. When I meet with him, we just don't talk about things in class. We talk about life, life experiences, too. Anna had similar experiences as Trey with her faculty advisor. She shared, "I'd say [my advisor] is very supportive. If I did have an issue, she'd be willing to listen." Anna also spoke highly about the instructor she perceived to be her mentor in describing the mentor as "open and personable." Hayden added to the perception of an advisor's willingness to provide support that Anna shared about her own advisor. He stated, "I really never asked my academic advisor [for support] outside of class, so. I mean, I'm sure, if I did, they'd be open to doing something like that." He also suggested that advisors who want to support students of color at a PWI should be "more open [to] sitting down, talking to them one-on-one. You know, building that relationship with them."

Even though Cynthia claimed that she was did not perceive she had a close relationship with her faculty advisor, she perceived advisors would be able to develop closer relationships with students of color by "maybe just being open... I feel like as a person of color, if you can't really relate to your advisor, you probably won't visit with them as much." Frank also spoke of his perceptions as a student of color at a PWI, but focused on respect. He shared, "[As a student of color at a PWI,] you face something new every day, you face different people every day, individualities and... people have their own assertions about everything... it's just a respect thing."

Recommendations for Supporting Students of Color at a PWI

Research question three explored what the participants would recommended for supporting students of color at a PWI. The recommendations that emerged from the

analysis of the data included: (1) faculty advisors need to build relationships with their advisees outside of classes, (2) students need to take at least one course with their advisor, (3) institutions should offer and promote cultural events and student organizations for students of color, and (4) students of color need to be pragmatic when selecting an institution.

Faculty advisors need to build relationships with their advisees outside of classes. Several of the participants mentioned the importance of faculty advisors building a personal relationship with their students outside of their conversations about coursework. Darius shared his perception that faculty advisors should meet with their “[advisees] more and get to know them on a more personal level.” Cynthia held a similar perception as Darius relative to relationships between faculty advisors and their students, identifying the importance of “having a personal relationship [advisor and advisee], conversations with students, sort of, like, joking around with them in class, or sort of like acknowledging them in class... so, just don’t focus on the students that you see all the time...”

Trey also had recommendations for faculty advisors and their relationships with students, stating that advisors should:

...just be more-- be more open about [building the advising relationship]. Like, just let the students know that they’re there besides academics, like whether they want to talk about academics or not, just letting them know that you’re there, you’re, you’re open to talking and letting your students come talk to you because sometimes that’s just what students need. Just to let some things off their shoulders and chest.

Anna explained that, as a Hispanic female at a PWI, she perceived that her White classmates and faculty “wouldn’t really think outside the box to [consider that] I might see a situation differently than they would.” She agreed with Trey’s suggestions, sharing her thoughts:

I think really encouraging [students of color], letting them know of, like, resources and different organizations that they could join. And just offering them help like that and asking them what, what are they looking to do in their life. What kind of career they’re wanting to take into. ‘Cause that also would help them whether they need to be in a Biology degree or in a Business degree. So, kind of just actually really getting to know them and not just meeting with them every once in a while. Even though I can enroll myself, I still go to [my advisor] because I trust her opinion and want to know if I’m on the right track.

Orlando shared that he was reluctant to attend a PWI as a student of color, and that he perceived he was treated “a little different[ly]” at the study institution. He echoed Darius and Cynthia’s suggestion that faculty advisors should build relationships with students of color by “really [introducing] themselves and getting -- letting the person get to know them before they just go off and ask questions about them [related to their academic goals and prior performance].”

In order to build a better relationship between faculty advisor and advisee, Bennett, Darius, and Hudson recommended the opportunity for more frequent meetings between students of color and their advisors. Bennett recommended the advising process be more about developing relationships and less of a transaction of signing enrollment forms. He said that as a student of color at a PWI, “the vibe is different... eyes are

staring, or this and that” and suggested that faculty advisors support students of color by having:

More appointments. You know, like in a sense of counseling. Seeing where [student advisees] truly are. A lot of things [involved in the advising process currently] are us getting papers [signed] and getting [the papers] back to [advisors]. ...In a sense of ethnicities, of Black [students]... [advisors should] meet with them more.

Also addressed by some of the participants were recommendations for faculty advisors relative to advising and building relationships specifically with students of color. Bennett recommended that, to better support students of color at a PWI, faculty advisors should be:

Helping [students of color]... Showing [them] the way and truly when I get with you, I guess you could say-- it don't have to be on a true personal level, but I feel like [advisors] can see somebody if they're lost or if they're -- don't know the ways [of college].

Cynthia agreed with Bennett's thoughts, and shared her perceptions that faculty advisors needed to assist students of color in navigating the college environment. She mentioned that she was always “on guard” as a student of color at a PWI and shared her perceptions of how faculty advisors should be, “I guess... maybe just being open. Just kind of a broad idea. I guess just making sure that [students of color] don't get lost.”

Hayden also recommended frequent and informal meetings between faculty advisors and students of color. He suggested that faculty advisors should focus on “just being-- I guess more open and sitting down, talking to [students of color] one-on-one.

You know, building that relationship with them. Letting them know, like, everything is cool. You know, like, we all not the same.” Paige mentioned the importance of faculty advisors meeting with students of color with the goal of “making them feel not like students of color. Like, making them feel equal to the rest of the class. And giving them the same opportunities and the same treatment, as well.” Orlando agreed with Paige that faculty advisors should “just keep looking at [students of color] like we’re equal and everything will be straight.”

Trey spoke further on the importance of developing the faculty advising relationship with students of color:

[Faculty advisors] could be, like, another reach-out person you could reach out to and talk to. I know, most of our people of color here are the athletes, so if they can have somebody they can talk to besides our coach.

Students need to take at least one course with their advisor. All except one of the participants shared that they had had their faculty academic advisor as an instructor in class. Darius explained how it benefitted him to have had his advisor as an instructor, stating “it was good ‘cause she already knew me, so like if she would had, like, popcorn questions, she would ask me sometimes so I felt like more part of the class because she was actually...knew who I was.” Anna had a similar experience to Darius, sharing her perception that “To build a positive relationship [with their faculty advisor] I really think [students] should maybe take one of their courses. That’s how I really got to know my advisor.” Frank agreed with the perceptions of Darius and Anna, saying, “It’s hard to describe, but [after having had my advisor as an instructor in class] yeah, he knows me.”

Trey shared that his relationship benefited in the same way that it developed in their one-on-one meetings. He said:

We had the same relationship when we were in his office. We joke around a lot. [My advisor would] kinda tell me-- I, I am kinda old. I'm 23 years old. He always...I'm always the oldest one in class. He always jokes and called me "old man" or "grandpa of the class". It was pretty-- it's pretty good. I like to have that kind of relationship with my advisor.

Institutions should offer and promote cultural events and student organizations for students of color. Most of the participants recommended adding cultural events or student organizations specifically for Black or Hispanic students as a way to support them on campus. Bennett identified that at the study institution, "there's not a lot of Black community things here", and went on to explain that could lead students of color to be "bored" on campus. Frank shared that he and his friends also noticed an absence of organizations like "Black sororities and fraternities" and suggested that would help support students of color on campus who are not athletes, but are looking for community with other students of color. Orlando, like Bennett and Frank, suggested that for the predominantly White study institution to better support students of color, "The main thing is, maybe more Black organizations."

Anna had a similar perception to Bennett, Frank, and Orlando. She mentioned a lack of cultural events for students of color and suggested the institution should develop them, but added that the events would need to be promoted as well as any other campus event. As an officer in the study institution's HALO club, she perceived the institution should:

Maybe celebrate not just like regular events, but also Hispanic events or African American events. Probably [increase promotion of cultural events] on social media just like they do basketball games and football games and stuff like that. Maybe putting more information out there and actually getting fliers for people that wanted to be involved in the organizations and students of color.

Trey also shared that student groups could be helpful in ensuring students of color can be involved on campus:

I'd probably say, like, just more minority groups. 'Cause I know when you walk around campus that is common...all you see is just, like, you know, the campus is predominantly White. That is what you see. So, maybe if [the study institution] just had more stuff organized for, like, minorities, for them to get together.

Similar to the thoughts of Anna and Trey, Paige suggested that hosting events specifically for students of color could help increase awareness of the racial diversity at the study institution. She said, "I feel like just making [students of color] aware... probably making it aware that we do have students of color on campus." Orlando added to the participants' recommendations for supporting students of color by suggesting, "The main thing is, maybe more Black organizations, but that comes with students also bringing it to [campus administration]." Although Darius perceived the study institution should be providing more cultural events, he did not perceive it was the responsibility of the study institution. Darius perceived, if the study institution wanted to better support students of color as a PWI:

I mean, [the study institution] could host little events and stuff. That's all I can think of. A lot of history stuff, like slavery and stuff. So, I don't feel like [the study institution] has to do that, but it would be nice to.

To better understand the recommendations provided by participants regarding cultural organizations and events, campus documents were reviewed. Institutional documents that were analyzed regarding the student organizations at the study institution indicated that a Black Student Organization was active on the campus from 1991 to 2015. The charter stated, "The fundamental purpose of this organization shall be to promote a communal bond among students of African descent" (Black Student Organization, 1991). Because the required documentation to maintain a student organization had not been submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students since 2015, the organization was inactive at the time of the study. A Hispanic student organization called the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) was created at the institution in the spring of 2017. HALO's mission statement included the goal of "fostering and promoting our Hispanic culture creating awareness about our heritage" (HALO, 2017).

Anna, being personally involved in HALO, shared her perception that the institution should better promote the organization. Hudson and Raquel, having been at the study institution for six and four years, respectively, were the only two participants who remembered having a Black Student Organization on campus. While Raquel perceived the organization went inactive after its leaders graduated, Hudson had a different perception. He shared that he perceived the organization became inactive due to a lack of support by the institution.

Students of color need to be pragmatic when selecting an institution.

Pragmatic selection of the institution based on its cost-effectiveness was a consistent theme among participants, including those who were aware that they would be in a racial minority at the PWI. Of the 12 participants, seven shared that they chose the study institution for the athletic scholarship they were offered. Frank, Hudson, and Trey all chose to attend the study institution for football because the scholarship they were offered would offset tuition costs. Orlando, likewise, selected the study institution because of a football scholarship, despite his hesitation to attend a PWI. Bennett stated that upon graduating from high school, the study institution “was actually, honestly, the only place that gave me a scholarship.” Darius agreed that he chose the study institution “for football because I had a couple offers, but this was the best one.” Like Bennett and Darius, Hayden also chose the study institution because of the athletic scholarship that he was offered. He shared, “The opportunity was there. I mean, a lot of schools didn’t give me the opportunity because of grades or whatever.”

Other participants mentioned that affordability led them to choose to attend the study institution. Paige shared, “[The study institution] was really affordable and I didn’t want my parents to have to pay for me to go to school.” Anna agreed with Paige, based on the fact that she could save money by living with her sister, who already attended the study institution. Anna shared, “My parents were actually the ones who pushed me [to attend the study institution] a lot.” These practical financial concerns appeared to surpass any trepidation some participants had about the demographics of the student body at the study institution.

Some of the participants shared that the possibility of attending a PWI did not give them pause, based on similar racial demographics at their high schools. Cynthia shared:

I guess since my high school was, like, the same way, it didn't really shock me. I guess the only thing I was concerned about was because... I wasn't concerned about anything overt would happen, like really bad, but I guess I'm just always on my guard about smaller things.

Hayden shared that he had similar thoughts to Cynthia in how he decided to attend a PWI. He shared:

I really didn't think nothing of it. I was just like, "I'm fixing to go to school."

So, I mean, 'cause I already been in that kind of environment with a mixture of both [races]. So, it wasn't like, "Uh, I'm gonna be culture shocked" or anything.

Raquel's reasoning behind attending a PWI was similar to that of Hayden. She stated, "I didn't really think about [the fact that I would be attending a PWI] that much. I was just thinking about the academics here." Paige shared of the fact that she had been in the racial minority in school leading up to college, "Honestly, I didn't really think much about [attending a PWI], just because I knew that, regardless of the college I went to, I was gonna be a minority there." Darius agreed with Paige's perception by surmising, "Well, since my high school was pretty much the same [racial makeup], it wasn't really much of a change." Frank agreed with Paige and Darius. In addressing his mindset in choosing to attend a PWI, he stated plainly, "...it didn't bother me."

Unlike the other participants, Bennett and Orlando shared that they had reservations about attending a PWI. Bennett explained that having visited the institution on a football recruitment visit, his impression of the student body was misleading:

Only because my recruiter was Black and, in a sense, obviously I was around most of his friends and most of the athletes on the football team, which were Black, and guess you could say they tried to make it comfortable for me to make it seem like this is how it is.

Orlando also shared his initial reluctance to attend a PWI when he stated, “I did not want to [attend the study institution]. But my parents said it would be something good and new for me to tackle, so I should just go ahead and do that.” Orlando expanded that his parents thought being at a PWI would keep him out of trouble and allow him to stay focused on school.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the findings of this comparative case study including themes that emerged from analysis of the data. Findings were drawn from information gleaned through semi-structured interviews, university documents, the researcher’s field notes, and a reflexive journal. Research question one explored how students of color perceived faculty academic advising affected their persistence at the study institution. The analysis of the data collected to address this research question produced the following four themes: (1) advisor effects on student persistence may be limited, (2) there are differences between an assigned advisor and a campus mentor, (3) reluctance to disclose personal information to an advisor, and (4) a reliance on self. Research question two explored which interactions with faculty advisors students perceived to be supportive

of or hindering to their persistence. Themes that emerged in the data were: (1) poor advising experiences may lead to major changes, and (2) desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable. Research question three investigated what students would recommend for supporting students of color at a PWI. The recommendations that emerged from the data include: (1) faculty advisors need to build relationships with their advisees outside of classes, (2) students need to take at least one course with their advisor, (3) institutions should offer and promote cultural events and student organizations for students of color, and (4) students of color need to be pragmatic when selecting an institution. Chapter V will present a discussion of the findings including implications of the results of the study for higher education practice, recommendations for higher education practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter V presents an overview of the study and a discussion of the study's findings. Implications for higher education are discussed, as well as recommendations for higher education practice and suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students of color related to faculty academic advisors at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Of specific interest in this study were the students' perceptions of and experiences with how faculty advisors' actions supported or hindered their persistence, and what the students identified as best practices for supporting students of color at this type of institution. The following three research questions guided this study:

1. How do students of color perceive faculty academic advising affects their persistence at a Predominantly White Institution?
2. What interactions with faculty advisors do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution identify as supportive of or hindering to their persistence?
3. What do students of color at a Predominantly White Institution recommend as best practices for faculty advisors to support their academic persistence?

Nationally, students of color are enrolling in higher education and persisting to graduation at lower rates than their White counterparts (Snyder, deBray, & Dillow, 2016). Failure to earn a college degree leads students of color to experience disproportionate rates of unemployment (NCES, 2017) and lower lifetime earnings (Carnevale, Rose, & Ban, 2011). Socially, higher education benefits the populace by

generating more tax revenue and civic engagement (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). Museums and Ravello (2010) suggested that a lack of educational attainment leads to increased incarceration rates and a lack of academic preparation in subsequent generations. For institutions of higher education, student attrition jeopardizes the consistent tuition revenue that is critical for their fiscal solvency. Student attrition and loss of tuition revenue particularly affect public institutions whose budget allocations from the state continue to diminish (Mortenson, 2012).

Academic advising has been identified as one institutional process that could positively influence student persistence (e.g., Drake, 2011; McFarlane, 2013; Montag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, & Snell, 2012). Further, interaction with university faculty has been identified as something that contributes to student retention (e.g., Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lambert, Rocconi, Ribera, Miller, & Dong, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Tinto, 1987; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Researchers focusing primarily on students of color add that campus racial climate can affect academic persistence for that subgroup of students (e.g., Gusa, 2010; McClain & Perry, 2017; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem (1998) described a campus racial climate as being comprised of an institution's: (1) historical legacy, (2) structural diversity, (3) perceptions and attitudes between and among ethnic groups, and (4) intergroup relations.

The study institution falls below the national average for both the enrollment and graduation of students of color. Nationally, 58% of students enrolled in postsecondary degree-granting institutions in the United States (U.S.) in 2014 were White, while 17% were Black and 14% were Hispanic (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Student enrollment at

the study institution in 2017 was 63% White, 4% Black, and 10% Hispanic (Fact book, 2017). In 2013, White students graduated from undergraduate institutions at a rate of 63%, while Black and Hispanic students graduated at rates of 41% and 53%, respectively (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). At the study institution, graduation rates in 2016 were 37% for White students, but 16% for Black students and 31% for Hispanic students (IPEDS, 2017).

The conceptual framework for this study was Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework, which focuses on what leads students of color to be academically successful. Harper states, "most empirical studies amplify minority student failure and deficits instead of achievement" (p. 64). Harper developed an anti-deficit achievement framework based upon the findings of his qualitative study of 219 Black male undergraduate students at 42 colleges and universities in 20 U.S. states. His research purpose was to better understand how participants overcame obstacles and gained admission to select universities. Harper's framework reframes questions of racial gaps in academic achievement to avoid focusing on factors that lead to student failures, instead identifying successful characteristics of high-achieving students. Harper refers to these reframed research questions focusing on student achievement as "instead of queries" (p. 68). This study used Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework to explore how students of color at the study institution had achieved academic success in their persistence to upper-classman status at a PWI.

Using a collective case study design, the researcher gathered data through the lens of the researcher, semi-structured interviews, university documents, field notes, and reflexive journaling. As a qualitative study, data analysis occurred throughout the study,

synchronously with data collection, until no new information emerged (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Data gathered was analyzed using the constant comparative method, an ongoing process of comparing components within and between categories until closure is achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data was analyzed using open coding to identify significant pieces of data (Merriam, 2009), then using axial coding to further focus major themes (Saldaña, 2009). Data was analyzed through a social constructivist lens because the researcher perceives knowledge to be socially constructed and individual in nature. Results of the study can be used to inform how the study institution can better support the academic persistence of students of color through faculty academic advising.

The study institution is a public, regional university in the southern region of the U.S. In the fall of 2017, student enrollment was 5,458 (Fact book, 2017). The study institution is predominantly White, with student demographics reflecting 63% White students, 4% Black students, and 10% Hispanic students in Fall 2017. The university awards primarily four-year degrees, as well as 12 associate degrees, four master-level degrees, and one doctoral degree. The study institution uses a faculty advising model in which students are assigned to a faculty advisor at admission based on the student's chosen academic major. The university experienced several consecutive years of declining state funding leading up to the study, amounting to a 16% decrease in state funding in the 2016-2017 school year (personal communication, Institution President, June 10, 2016).

Participants in this study were 12 Black and Hispanic students, with a junior or senior-level classification. Table 1 lists the study participants by pseudonym, as well as identifying the age, race and gender, and academic standing of each participant at the

time of the study. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 29 and represented nine different academic majors. The gender demographics of participants included seven males and five females. Participants evenly represented academic standing, with six being in their junior year at the study institution, and six being seniors at the time of the study.

Table 1

Participant Attributes

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Race/Gender</u>	<u>Academic Standing</u>
Anna	20	Hispanic female	Junior
Bennett	23	Black male	Senior
Cynthia	20	Black and Hispanic female	Junior
Darius	21	Black male	Junior
Frank	23	Black male	Junior
Hayden	23	Black male	Senior
Hudson	23	Black male	Senior
Lainey	29	Hispanic female	Senior
Orlando	22	Black male	Senior
Paige	20	Hispanic female	Junior
Raquel	21	Black female	Senior
Trey	23	Black male	Junior

Discussion of the Findings

Academic advising has been well-defined in the literature as an institutional practice that can positively influence student satisfaction and retention (e.g., Drake, 2011; McFarlane, 2013; Montag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, & Snell, 2012). By interviewing students of color who had persisted to junior or senior-level classification, this study gathered information on how faculty academic advisors had affected the academic persistence of students of color at the study institution based on participant perceptions of the advising they had received in the context of the predominantly White campus climate.

Advising Impact on Persistence

Research question one explored how students of color perceived faculty academic advisors affected their persistence at the study institution. The analysis of the data collected to address this research question produced the following four themes: (1) advisor effects on student persistence may be limited, (2) there are differences between an assigned advisor and a campus mentor, (3) reluctance to disclose personal information to an advisor, and (4) a reliance on self.

Advisor effects on student persistence may be limited. Half of the participants perceived the advising they had received did not affect their academic persistence. This suggests that those participants see persistence as being dependent on personal characteristics more so than the help offered by their assigned advisor. Much of the literature advancing the notion of academic advising as supportive of student retention addresses academic advising without specifically focusing on advising students of color at a PWI (e.g., Drake, 2011; McFarlane, 2013; Montag, et al., 2012). It is possible that students of color, who are navigating the campus racial climate as a member of racial minority when attending a PWI have unique needs that must be addressed before they perceive they are being academically supported.

Additionally, these mixed findings suggest that students may not be instructed by their advisor as to the role advisement plays in a student's academic career, and that students are not uniformly convinced about the significance of their advisor in their academic persistence. Further, these findings suggest a lack of consistency from one advisor to another with regard to the perceived impact that they have on student advisees.

Lambert, Rocconi, Ribera, Miller, and Dong (2012) concluded in their review of the 2011 National Survey of Student Engagement that student persistence is positively impacted by a faculty focus on teaching clarity or transparency. Given that Crookston (1972) described academic advising as a form of teaching, this finding could imply that faculty advisors at the study institution would be more effective in their advising by incorporating teaching practices to clarify the advising process for students. Crookston (2009) outlined an additional benefit to incorporating teaching practices into advising by explaining that doing so would encourage faculty advisors not to see advising responsibilities as “an added burden” (p. 81).

The six participants who said advising was important to their persistence cited either the advisor being knowledgeable in providing accurate information and course selection or the advisor’s behavior having been supportive and caring. This finding provides insight as to what the study participants were looking for in an advisor: someone they can rely on for accurate information, and someone to whom they feel comfortable going for assistance. The finding supports the work of Crocker, Kahla, and Allen (2014) as well as Drake (2011) who advanced the importance of building relationships between advisors and advisees. For students of color, part of this relationship building may be for academic advisors to address the added barriers that these students are facing at a PWI before setting foot in a classroom. Faculty advisors may need to gather additional information from their advisees who are students of color to better understand the student’s prior academic experiences and any unique needs or concerns that they may have as a result of being a student of color attending a PWI.

There are differences between an assigned advisor and a campus mentor.

Although incoming students at the study institution are assigned a faculty academic advisor at admission based on their chosen academic major, most of the participants shared that they chose to visit with a different institutional representative to discuss issues that they faced outside of course selection. This suggests participants perceived a difference between their assigned advisor and a person they would consider a mentor. The tendency to find another institutional representative to act as a mentor shows initiative on the part of the students in that they sought out an institutional representative to form personal relationships with a focus on mentorship. The finding that participants viewed an alternate institutional representative as a mentor suggests that students of color may be seeking out a campus representative who they identify with more so than their faculty advisor. This could be because they did not feel comfortable with their assigned advisors, but it could also be because students of color do not need to be matched perfectly with an academic advisor in order to be satisfied with the support they receive from institutional personnel, as was suggested by Harding (2012).

This finding indicates that students will not necessarily develop a close personal relationship with their advisor, but may gravitate toward another institutional representative with whom they feel a natural connection, or someone with whom they better identify than their assigned faculty advisor. Of the seven Black male participants, five shared that they sought out another Black male on campus. Of the five female participants, three shared that they perceived another female on campus as a mentor. This trend in the data supports the notion that faculty members may not be able to meet all of the needs of students of color related to supporting their persistence. The finding

that participants perceive their faculty advisor to be different than a campus mentor aligns with O'Banion's (1972) assertion that distinct advising steps could be accomplished by various institutional representatives. This could be applicable for students of color if they are matched by the institution with an additional campus mentor to complete tasks such as the exploration of life goals and vocational goals before meeting with their assigned advisor for the more transactional steps of choosing a degree and related courses. Separating these responsibilities could provide students the added support of someone with whom they feel a sense of community, and could remove some of the advising responsibility of faculty who are also tasked with teaching and research obligations (Allen & Smith, 2008; Self, 2013).

Reluctance to disclose personal information to an advisor. With the exception of Bennett and Trey, participants consistently reported that they did not speak with their assigned advisor about issues outside of coursework. This may have resulted from the participants not being able to identify with their assigned faculty advisor. Although all participants insisted that having a faculty academic advisor of a different race or ethnicity than their own did not affect their advising relationship, not identifying with their advisor appears to have led participants to seek out other mentors. This finding is meaningful because it implies that participants were receiving transactional, prescriptive advising, in which the focus was predominantly on course selection, more commonly than developmental advising, in which the advisor and advisee share information and focus on the student's strengths.

Developmental advising is recognized in the literature as the more effective advising approach (e.g., Crocker, Kahla, & Allen, 2014; Hale, Graham, & Johnson, 2009;

Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). Particularly as students of color at a PWI, it is meaningful that advisors are failing to utilize developmental advising practices because student experiences on campus or in their prior educational environments may not be taken into consideration by their assigned advisors who are focusing more on scheduling classes. This finding supports the research of Barker (2011) and Strayhorn (2008) who emphasized the importance of advisors understanding the experiences of students of color as well as the benefits of having racial diversity among university faculty.

A reliance on self. Of the 12 participants, eight identified personal characteristics on which they relied to persist. This self-reliance was also evidenced by the participants' unwillingness to confide in their advisors, because some participants sought out another mentor at the institution or persisted despite the negative interactions they had with their assigned faculty advisors. This finding is supported by the work of Harper (2010), which is the conceptual framework in which this study is framed. Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework posits that some students of color are able to persist despite the barriers they encounter, which was evidenced by some of the participants in the current study.

The independence relayed by two thirds of the participants demonstrates resilience among them, but also suggests a lack of integration into the campus community if they were unable to relate to their academic advisor and approach that person for academic support. Integration into the campus community is something that Astin (1984) and Tinto (1975) identified as a cause for attrition in higher education. This finding suggests that students of color at the study institution have persisted despite common barriers to persistence that they may have experienced, such as the barrier that exists for

students of color when they have a lack of faculty of color as role models (Gusa, 2010; Harding, 2012; McClain & Perry, 2017).

Harding (2012) described key characteristics that many students of color share in their primary education experience, including a lack of role models, that university advisors could mitigate if proactively addressed. More specifically, Gusa (2010) examined many aspects of Whiteness on a college campus that serve to deter the inclusion of students of color, such as deficit messages in assigned texts or microaggressions that students of color experience in the form of stares and less opportunity than their White peers to participate in classroom discussions. Gusa (2010) claimed that hiring faculty and administrators of color benefits students of color by increasing their feelings of belongingness. McClain and Perry (2017) reviewed nearly two dozen research studies pertaining to the retention of students of color at PWIs and concluded that hiring faculty and staff of color related positively to the retention of those students. The fact that participants in this study described experiencing microaggressions at the study institution suggests they have experienced barriers to their inclusion into the predominantly White campus community, but rely on a personal determination to persist.

Research emphasizes building community among students for color to positively impact their academic persistence (e.g., Gusa, 2010; Palmer & Maramba, 2011; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Whereas Palmer and Maramba (2011) specifically suggest having images of Black scholars and professionals for students of color to see in campus buildings, Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) addressed Hispanic students building community by seeking out other Latina/o students and taking diversity courses. Parker, Barnhardt, Pascarella, and McCowin (2016) echoed Yosso et al. (2009) in their

support of diversity courses by asserting that the courses positively influence college students' moral development. In addition to diversity courses, diversity training for students and employees may assist in supporting students of color at PWIs (Hurtado, 2007). The absence of these practices for supporting students of color that exists at the study institution further indicates that the participants had persisted to upper-classman status in spite of barriers to their inclusion into the campus community. The participant perception that their academic persistence was largely based on internal qualities of determination and resilience suggests a paucity of support systems at the study institution for supporting students of color.

Advising Experiences that Support or Hinder Student Persistence

Research question two explored which interactions with faculty advisors students perceived to be supportive of or hindering to their persistence. Themes that emerged in the data were: (1) poor advising experiences may lead to major changes, and (2) desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable.

Poor advising experiences may lead to major changes. Darius and Paige both shared that they changed majors after poor advising experiences. While Darius shared that his advisor told him the degree would be too difficult to manage as a student athlete, he also spoke of two teammates who had successfully completed that degree. Darius trusted that his advisor would know more about the challenges of the degree program than he would as a student. Paige was less ambiguous about the reasons for her major change. She reportedly felt that her advisor did not attempt to consider her prior academic preparation and was clearly insulted by her advisor's suggestion to change to a Spanish major based on an assumption that Paige would be fluent in Spanish. Anna

shared that a friend of hers at the institution changed majors when her advisor was unaware of the study institution's enrollment policy.

These findings support the position of Montag et al. (2012) in their assertion that students who are dissatisfied with the academic advising they receive will change academic majors. These participant perceptions of poor advising align with Tinto's (1975) assertion that failing to achieve congruency between the student's expectations and the climate at the institution is one factor leading to voluntary withdrawal. This is significant for the study institution because participant perceptions suggest academic advising as an area in which some participants did not perceive congruency between their academic persistence and the advising they had received.

Desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable. When participants spoke highly of their relationship with their advisor, they often cited the advisor being well-informed about the institution's policies and degree plans, as well as how friendly or approachable their advisor was. Participants shared frustration with the advising they received if they perceived their advisor was not knowledgeable of institutional policies, athletic eligibility requirements, or degree plans. Hayden and Hudson each shared an advising experience in which the courses they enrolled in were not appropriate for keeping them athletically eligible. Hayden then shared that his second advisor was more aware of eligibility requirements and got him "back on track." This desire for a knowledgeable advisor aligns with the findings of Allen and Smith (2008) who asserted that giving students accurate information is of paramount importance in the academic advising process. This finding is also supported by the research of O'Neal (2013), who suggested that students are less satisfied with

advising and withdraw from their institutions more often when they receive inaccurate information from an academic advisor.

Participants who spoke highly of their advisor or the person they viewed as a mentor mentioned positive qualities such as trustworthiness and approachability. In referring to the person she saw as a mentor on campus, Anna shared, “She was my freshman [orientation] instructor and she was very open and personable. And was very open with always offering her office time.” Bennett explained that his relationship with his academic advisor improved over time, and that his advisor now “respects” him as an upperclassman for having successfully completed the pre-requisite coursework for the degree. Cynthia and Lainey both shared that they respected the faculty in their respective academic departments, and that faculty expertise contributed to their persistence and excitement about the degree.

This participant feedback supports Harding’s (2012) assertion that “It is not necessary to look like the students we advise, but it is mandatory that we gain their respect and in turn give them the respect they deserve” (para. 12). Darius emphasized the importance of mutual trust and Paige highlighted the importance of an advisor being understanding, specifically of a student’s racial background and educational experiences. This emphasis on relationship echoes the work of Crocker, Kahla, and Allen (2014), as well as Drake (2011), who advanced the advising relationship as an important factor in student retention. The participants having shared the qualities they perceive as supportive in an advisor or mentor aligns with Conrad and Gasman’s (2015) assertion that, when interacting with students of color, institutional faculty and staff should expect

successful student outcomes, offer intentional support services, and foster a shared responsibility for student academic success.

Recommendations for Supporting Students of Color at a PWI

Research question three investigated what students would recommend for supporting students of color at a PWI. There were four recommendations that emerged from analysis of the data including: (1) faculty advisors need to build relationships with their advisees outside of classes, (2) students need to take at least one course with their advisor, (3) institutions should offer and promote cultural events and student organizations for students of color, and (4) students of color need to be pragmatic when selecting an institution.

Faculty advisors need to build relationships with their advisees outside of classes. Participants suggested advisors take time for frequent meetings with student advisees and that they get to know students personally. This was uniquely important to Orlando and Paige, who recommended advisors take time to ask students of color about their prior academic experiences to gain a better understanding of their needs. Bennett advanced that advisees would benefit from having more frequent meetings with their advisors. Frank and Hayden suggested advisors be more available for students who have questions and Hudson emphasized the importance of “staying connected.” The benefits of frequent advising meetings are also seen in McFarlane’s (2013) research which found that frequent advising interactions positively impacts first-year student satisfaction and persistence.

Cynthia and Trey submitted that advisors can build a positive relationship with their advisees by joking with them when they see them in class. Frank and Lainey both

recommended advisors be friendly with students and interact with them outside of the classroom setting. These findings are congruent with Tinto's (1975) assertion that interacting with faculty in and outside of the classroom is beneficial for student persistence. Additionally, these finding support the assertion of Harding (2010) that campus personnel attend campus events to build relationships with students of color. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) supported this participant suggestion in their claim that students report higher levels of involvement and feelings of being supported at the institution when they actively engaged with faculty both in and out of the classroom.

Students need to take at least one course with their advisor. All but one participant reported they had taken at least one course with their assigned faculty advisor as the instructor, and most saw that experience as beneficial to their advising relationship. Darius explained, "It was good 'cause she already knew me... so I felt like more part of the class." Raquel was the only participant who had not had her advisor as an instructor for a class. She shared that the two people she did go to for guidance and to whom she would disclose personal information were both instructors that she had in previous semesters. These findings mirror the literature asserting that student-faculty interaction contributes to student retention (e.g., Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lambert, Rocconi, Ribera, Miller, & Dong, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Tinto, 1987; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). However, some literature suggests faculty view advising responsibilities as a secondary priority to their teaching obligations (e.g., Allen & Smith, 2008; Self, 2013), which could be a barrier to faculty spending adequate time with their student advisees to fulfill this participant recommendation.

Institutions should offer and promote cultural events and student organizations for students of color. The majority of participants suggested more cultural awareness activities and student organizations at the study institution to support the persistence of students of color. This suggestion may be more for institutional administrators than for faculty advisors to realize, but speaks to improving the larger campus climate. This finding supports Archambault's (2015) assertion of the importance of cultural competence of university personnel, as well as Palmer and Maramba's (2011) suggestion that college campuses host events to which they invite Black speakers. This practice was supported by Hudson's suggestion that the study institution invite a social activist to speak at the university during Black History Month to promote campus awareness.

Hosting cultural campus events could provide students of color an avenue by which to increase their involvement on campus and interact with the larger student body. Berger and Milem (1999) concluded from a longitudinal study of over 1,300 undergraduate students that campus involvement was strongly predictive of continued enrollment at the institution. Because students are more likely to be retained at a college or university if they integrate into the campus community academically and socially (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983) and become involved in their academic experience (Astin, 1984), these events could assist the study institution in retaining students of color.

Paige's example of her advisor assuming she was fluent in Spanish could be an example of a microaggression, or subtle insult (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) in advising. Hayden also shared that attending a PWI as a student of color was initially "kinda rough." He expanded by saying, "I think because [other students] come from,

like, smaller towns, or whatever, so they're not used to seeing Black people." He shared that often he would be ignored in conversations. Hayden stated, "I'd try to chime in on a conversation with somebody who's just, like, White or whatever, and they wouldn't, they wouldn't, really, respect my opinion, or whatever- I feel like, at least. Or they wouldn't acknowledge me being there..." Hotchkins (2016) advanced that racial microaggressions are a symptom of a negative campus racial climate. Research suggests that a campus racial climate can affect the academic success of minority students at PWIs (e.g., Gusa, 2010; McClain & Perry, 2017; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). For that reason, it is imperative for institutions to assess the quality of their campus racial climate if they intend to improve the retention of their students of color. By promoting cultural events and student organizations, the study institution may be able to improve the larger campus racial climate, thereby increasing their support of students of color on campus.

Students of color need to be pragmatic when selecting an institution. Most of the participants shared pragmatic reasons for having elected to attend the study institution, despite the fact that they would be part of a racial minority in the student demographics. Of the 12 participants, eight reported that they chose to attend the study institution because they were offered a scholarship. Another two shared that the institution was more affordable than others with similar academic programs.

Participants shared various levels of comfort with the idea of attending a PWI, but the general consensus was that they would endure any potential feelings of discomfort as a student of color at a PWI to accomplish their academic goals. Many added that they were accustomed to being in situations in which they were treated differently because of their race or ethnicity because of past educational experiences in predominantly White

environments. This finding relates to the research of Contreras et al. (2018) who asserted that access, outreach, diversity, and campus racial climate each affect the institutional selection of Black undergraduate students, but it goes further to suggest students of color are considering the affordability of the institution.

When speaking of his decision to attend the study institution for the football scholarship he was offered, Hayden shared, “I really didn’t think nothing of it. I was just like, ‘I’m fixing to go to school.’” Orlando was more direct when sharing his thoughts about attending a PWI. He stated, “I did not want to do it” and explained that his parents convinced him to attend. Findings suggest the value and financial assistance offered by the study institution are appealing for students of color, and that the study institution should continue to invest in the scholarship awards offered in order to attract students of color in the future.

Implications for Higher Education Practice

The findings of this study suggest several implications for higher education practice. Although the extant research has established academic advising as a tool to increase student retention (e.g., Drake, 2011; McFarlane, 2013; Montag, Campo, Weissman, Walmsley, & Snell, 2012), less is known about how an institution might use academic advising specifically to support the persistence of students of color. While much of the findings could be used to support all student advisees, it is important to consider the specific needs of students of color operating within the larger campus climate if institutions aim to close the racial gap in degree attainment. By taking into account the participants’ perceptions of the campus racial climate at the study institution, findings emerge within the context of students of color attending a PWI.

The first implication gleaned from this study related to the finding that participant perceptions were mixed as to whether faculty advising affected their academic persistence is that faculty academic advising may not be as supportive of the academic persistence of students of color at a PWI as research suggests of the overall student population. This indicates the study institution may not be experiencing the retention benefits that some researchers suggest is possible through academic advising (e.g., Drake, 2011; McFarlane, 2013; Montag et al., 2012). The second implication related to the finding that participants perceived a different institutional representative than their assigned faculty advisor as a mentor to whom they would go for guidance is that students of color may be receiving support for their academic persistence from other institutional representatives, whom they perceive to be mentors. If this is the case, the study institution could positively impact the academic persistence of students of color by fostering these mentor opportunities instead of relying on the relationship between students of color and their faculty advisors to be adequately supportive.

The implication that arises from the findings that: (1) poor advising experiences may lead to major changes, and (2) desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable is that participants valued accuracy of information and accessibility or friendliness when interacting with a faculty advisor. When they do not experience the advisor qualities they desire, some students will change majors or be at risk for leaving the institution entirely.

Because faculty advisors' primary responsibilities are teaching and research (Allen & Smith, 2008; Self, 2013), their advising responsibilities may not receive adequate attention for faculty advisors to become proficient in university policies and

various degree plan requirements as well as knowledge of campus resources and athletic eligibility requirements, for example. Students may prefer a developmental advising relationship in which they are advised holistically (Smith, 2002), but much of their interactions with their assigned advisor is transactional, based on participant feedback that they do not discuss issues outside of course selection with their faculty advisors.

This may be because students have a different institutional representative on campus who they approach for issues outside of course scheduling. This finding aligns with Rendón's (1994) assertion that students of color who feel validated in the campus community are more likely to succeed there. Ultimately, students who are unsatisfied with their advising experiences may be at a risk for attrition from the academic department, as a student major, or from the university as a whole.

The two main implications that arise from participant recommendations for supporting students of color at a PWI are that: (1) participants want more opportunities to foster community with other students of color at the predominantly White study institution, and (2) when students of color consider attending a PWI, affordability is an important factor. Participants shared that they wanted the opportunity to develop community with students from common racial backgrounds. Given the widely accepted research on inclusion and persistence (e.g., Astin, 1984; Berger & Milem, 1999), this seems especially important at a PWI where students of color are in the numerical minority. In his theory of student involvement, Astin (1984) suggested that participation in academic and extra-curricular activities was largely indicative of continued enrollment in college. The participants of the study perceived an absence of cultural events and organizations, implying that the campus racial climate was lacking for students of color.

Berger and Milem (1999) found that Black students are “less likely to perceive the institution as being supportive and less likely to persist,” despite their initial commitment to the institution (p. 657). Colleges and universities may suffer the attrition of students of color if they fail to foster an inclusive campus racial climate. For a university with very few advisors of color, the study institution may benefit from facilitating student community opportunities in order to improve student perceptions of the campus racial climate. Failing to do so could result in the institution maintaining racially disparate educational attainment and the continued attrition of students of color.

Harper (2010) developed the anti-deficit achievement framework by focusing on how students of color overcame barriers to academic achievement. Though tuition costs can be a barrier for all students, additional barriers may exist for a student of color considering attending a PWI. Although some participants shared reservations about attending a PWI, their concerns were eventually outweighed by the opportunity for financial support. Other participants shared that they were not discouraged from attending a PWI, but that they also considered affordability when selecting the predominantly White study institution. Though cost is a factor that many students consider in selecting a college or university, this finding implies that scholarships are important in students of color electing to attend a PWI. As such, those institution types should continue to invest in the financial awards they offer in order to appeal to prospective students of color. If not, students of color may select an institution with different student demographics that offer similar tuition costs. Further, institutions should be aware that students of color are conscious of the cost of the institution. This

implies colleges and universities should also consider funding options for students who are unable to achieve an academic or athletic scholarship.

Recommendations for Higher Education Practice

This study offers several concrete recommendations for higher education based on the findings derived from analyzing the data. These recommendations are: (1) discuss with students the importance of academic advising and the role the process plays in a student's larger college experience, (2) provide mentorship opportunities for students of color at PWIs, (3) expand required training for academic advisors, (4) create a Center for Diversity and Inclusion on campus, and (5) diversify scholarship offers for students of color.

The first recommendation for institutions of higher education to better support the academic persistence of students of color is for academic advisors to discuss with incoming students, in their initial advisement meeting, the role of academic advising and its importance in the larger college experience in order to clarify the purpose of the process and answer any questions that the students may have. Crookston (1972) was the first to advance that academic advising is, in fact, a form of teaching. However, he did not specifically outline how the process constitutes instruction. Lowenstein (2005), who wrote that an advisor is "arguably the most important person in the student's educational world" (p. 68), addressed Crookston's concept of *advising as teaching* by advancing that academic advisors teach by instructing students about their entire college curriculum the way an instructor would teach the curriculum of one course. Lowenstein's main premise was that "learning transpires when a student makes sense of his or her overall curriculum just as it does when a person understands an individual course" (p. 69). He posited that

when an advisor teaches a student about the overall curriculum and how courses fit together, it enhances the learning that takes place in individual courses.

Some institutions choose to clarify the purpose of the academic advising process by creating an advising syllabus. Habley, Bloom, and Robbins (2010) reported that between 26% and 31% of higher education institutions were using advising syllabi in 2010, which they perceive to be contributing to student retention, based on a national survey of over 1,000 colleges and universities conducted by ACT. Resources from the National Academic Advising Association on how to create an advising syllabus suggest that advisors include elements such as a definition of advising and an explanation of the responsibilities of the student and the advisor (Trabant, 2006). By clarifying what advising is and how it can support students academically, the study institution may improve how students see advising as contributing to their academic success.

The second recommendation for higher education is for PWIs to facilitate mentorship opportunities for students of color. Gusa (2010) and Harding (2012) speak to the importance of students of color having faculty of color as role models on campus. Given that the study institution employed only one Black faculty member and five Hispanic faculty members out of the 201 total faculty in Fall 2017 (Institutional Research Specialist, personal communication, August 22, 2018), there is a clear paucity of such role models available to serve as faculty advisors at the study institution. However, participants shared that they sought out institutional representatives in various other roles on campus who they perceived to be mentors. This suggests that a student of color may have a mentor in addition to their faculty advisor. Intentionally developing a dual model of advising would be similar to the process described by DiMaria (2015) in which

students are assigned two advisors, one in their first year and another in subsequent academic years. By assigning a mentor to students of color as well as a faculty advisor, PWIs may assist that population of students to persist by providing multiple avenues for support. This recommendation also aligns with the dual advising model suggested by Fernandez, Davis, and Jenkins (2017) at a public HBCU who concluded, “A shared advising model can be an effective way to achieve student success for all students, including marginalized groups” (p. 30).

The third recommendation based on the data is the introduction or expansion of training offered to faculty advisors. In addition to training faculty advisors about the programs of study within their respective academic departments, institutions would benefit from educating faculty advisors about university policies related to campus resources and athletic eligibility requirements. Further, advisor training should encompass soft skills and cultural competence training to equip faculty advisors with abilities necessary to support students from various racial backgrounds. Harding (2012) claimed, “It is not necessary to look like the students we advise, but it is mandatory that we gain their respect and in turn give them the respect they deserve” (para. 12). Hurtado (2007) posited diversity training as beneficial for students as well as employees. This training could help to combat deficit perceptions held by faculty advisors, which Hotchkins (2016) asserted are a persistent form of microaggression in the American school system.

Since advising responsibilities are often perceived by faculty as secondary to their teaching and research obligations (Allen & Smith, 2008; Self, 2013), institutions of higher education need to find ways to acknowledge or reward academic advising by

faculty members who attend the trainings in order to demonstrate institutional commitment to quality academic advising and increase the emphasis that faculty place on those responsibilities. A method for doing so would be to integrate advising responsibilities into the teaching component of promotion and tenure considerations. Additionally, institutions may incentivize additional training by alleviating some of the time that faculty members spend on advising responsibilities. An option for doing so would be to hire student employees to support academic advising initiatives within academic departments who could conduct lower-level advising sessions with lower over pre-requisite courses, program course sequences, or university general education requirements.

The fourth recommendation based on the findings derived from analyzing the data from this study is for institutions to create a Center for Diversity and Inclusion if they do not already have a comparable department. This type of department could coordinate cultural events and sponsor minority student organizations. The creation of this campus department would establish a physical space for students of color posited by Cabrera, Watson, and Franklin (2016) as important to students of color in navigating a PWI. As Pewewardy and Frey (2004) concluded, students of color may perceive the campus racial climate differently than White students. A Center for Diversity and Inclusion would be a benefit to the campus racial climate in that the office could provide the aforementioned cultural competency training and coordinate regular campus perception surveys to gather feedback from students of color regarding how they experience the campus' racial climate. In order to continue supporting the persistence of students of color at a PWI,

institutions should continue to gather feedback from the constituencies that they aim to support.

Given that the perceptions and attitudes between and among ethnic groups contribute to a campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998), it is important for an institution to be transparent in justifying the need for the addition of such a department. That transparency could mitigate any resentment that students in the racial majority might experience as a result of the allocation of institutional resources. Being forthcoming in justifying a Center for Diversity and Inclusion may also assist in facilitating communication between students from various racial backgrounds and to avoid microaggressions that may stem from potential feelings of resentment.

The fifth recommendation for higher education practice based on this study's findings addresses the issue of affordability. Colleges and universities should continue to offer financial assistance for academic and athletic ability, but should diversify these scholarships to attract students of color from across the achievement spectrum. Additionally, institutions should work to keep tuition costs affordable and advertise those efforts in recruiting future students. Montalvo (2013) stressed the importance of providing a bilingual diversity page on an institutional website in retaining Hispanic students. Financial assistance information should be made available to students and their families in both English and Spanish to promote familiarity with and understanding of the available information.

Recommendation for Future Research

Throughout the process of completing this study, future research needs have emerged. It would be helpful to conduct another case study including semi-structured

interviews of students of color at Hispanic serving institutions and historically Black colleges and universities. Such a study could identify how students of color at those institution types perceive how the advising they receive contributes to their academic persistence. This could provide comparison data to determine differences and similarities with the data from this study of students of color at a PWI. Another variation of this study that may be informative would be to conduct a comparative case study with students of color at a PWI that uses a different advising model with full-time advising personnel. That type of study could help to reveal which model students perceive as more or less supportive of their academic persistence.

Another informative study would be a mixed-methods study in which the persistence and graduation rates of students of color are examined following the implementation of new support initiatives. This would enable institutions to substantiate longitudinal retention data with student perceptions data collected in interviews or focus groups. From there, institutions would be able to justify future investments in student support initiatives with the intention of retaining students and subsequent tuition revenue.

Additionally, because the participants were all students of color and the researcher is not, it may be beneficial to recreate the collective case study with a person of color conducting the semi-structured interviews to gather participant perceptions. This may increase the participants' comfort level with discussing how they perceive their advisors affect their academic persistence and increase the level of discourse related to the experiences of students of color at a PWI.

Lastly, it would be beneficial to conduct a collective case study to identify how a mentor program might influence the persistence of students of color at a PWI. After

speaking with the participants of this study and gathering an understanding about how they differentiate between campus advisors and mentors, it would be beneficial to understand how students perceive mentorship supports their persistence. Further, institutions of higher education would be able to determine if the implementation of a mentor program could supplement an existing academic advising program to improve student retention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of students of color related to faculty academic advisors at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Of specific interest in this study were participant perceptions of and experiences with how faculty advisors' actions supported or hindered their persistence, and what the participants identified as best practices for supporting students of color at this type of institution. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, university documents, field notes, reflexive journaling, and the lens of the researcher. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method, as well as open and axial coding.

By investigating the extent to which students of color perceived the faculty academic advising they received affected their persistence, findings emerged indicating participants were not convinced that it did. Also, participants perceived a different institutional representative than their assigned faculty advisor as a mentor to whom they would go for guidance. These findings imply that: (1) faculty academic advising may not be as supportive of the academic persistence of students of color at a PWI as research suggests of the overall student population, and (2) students of color may be receiving

support for their academic persistence from other institutional representatives, whom they perceive to be mentors.

Addressing the research question of which interactions with faculty advisors students perceived to be supportive of or hindering to their persistence, findings were: (1) poor advising experiences may lead to major changes, and (2) desirable advisor qualities include being knowledgeable and approachable. These findings imply that participants value accuracy of information and approachability when interacting with a faculty advisor. When they do not experience the advisor qualities they desire, some students will change majors or be at risk for leaving the institution entirely.

The two main implications that arise from analyzing the data related to the recommendations that participants provided for better supporting students of color at PWIs are: (1) participants want more opportunities to foster community with other students of color at the predominantly White study institution, and (2) when students of color consider attending a PWI, affordability is an important factor.

Recommendations based on the analysis of the data are that PWIs could better support the academic persistence of students of color by: (1) explaining to students the importance of academic advising and the role the process plays in a student's larger college experience, (2) providing mentorship opportunities for students of color at PWIs, (3) expanding required training for academic advisors, (4) creating a Center for Diversity and Inclusion on campus, and (5) diversifying scholarship offers for students of color.

The participants for this study were generally not dissatisfied with the academic advising they had received, nor with the campus racial climate, because they had already learned to navigate in predominantly White spaces before coming to college. If

universities like the study institution intend to better support the academic persistence of the students of color enrolled at their institutions, they should consider clarifying the advising process and providing better training for academic advisors, as well as establishing a campus department dedicated to cultural awareness events and training and diversifying funding options for potential students of color. Doing so could help those institutions demonstrate to their current students of color, as well as to prospective students of color, their commitment to the academic success of that student population.

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Appendix A

Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board Approval



May 8, 2018 9:41 AM CDT

Stephanie Jones
Educational Psychology Leaders

Re: IRB2018-286 Faculty Advising to Support the Academic Persistence of Students of Color at One Predominantly White Institution

Findings: Approved. Good luck.
Expiration Date: *April 30, 2019*

Dear Dr. Stephanie Jones, Wendy Yoder:

A Texas Tech University IRB reviewer has approved the proposal referenced above within the expedited category of:

- 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The approval is effective from May 8, 2018 to April 30, 2019. The expiration date must appear on your consent document(s).

Expedited research requires continuing IRB review. You will receive an automated email approximately 30 days before April 30, 2019. At this time, should you wish to continue your protocol, a Renewal Submission will be necessary. Any change to your protocol requires a Modification Submission for review and approval before implementation.

Your study may be selected for a Post-Approval Review (PAR). A PAR investigator may contact you to observe your data collection procedures, including the consent process. You will be notified if your study has been chosen for a PAR.

Should a subject be harmed or a deviation occur from either the approved protocol or federal regulations (45 CFR 46), please complete an Incident Submission form.

When your research is complete and no identifiable data remains, please use a Closure Submission to terminate this protocol.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly C. Cukrowicz'.

Kelly C. Cukrowicz, Ph.D.

Appendix B

Study Institution Institutional Review Board Approval



June 18, 2018

Ms. Wendy Yoder
Department of Retention Management

Re: IRB-PHS Application

Dear Ms. Yoder,

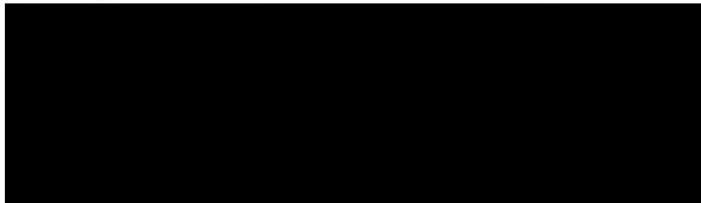
The Protection of Human Subjects Committee, through expedited review and with submitted revisions, has approved your research entitled:

“Faculty Advising to Support the Academic Persistence of Students of Color at One Predominantly White Institution”.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to notify the committee and submit any modifications to the study protocol prior to implementation. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to submit an annual report if the study extends past a year and a final report upon completion of the protocol. IRB FORM # HS-3 is provided on the [REDACTED] web site for your use in completing annual and final reports. For institutional compliance and auditing purposes, you are required to maintain all records pertaining to your conducted research including any informed consent forms for three years after completion of the research. For funded research, consult the time required for retention of records by the funding agency. [REDACTED] disposition policies should be used when disposing of research records.) Annual reports must be received and approved by the PHSC by the anniversary date of the original approval.

The committee wishes you much success with the study.

Sincerely,



Appendix C

Gatekeeper Recruitment Script

Dear [gatekeeper]:

My name is Wendy Yoder and I am currently a doctoral candidate at Texas Tech University in the higher education program. I am conducting a study that explores the perceptions and experiences of students who belong to a racial minority group and attend a predominantly White institution. Of specific interest is how students perceive the faculty academic advising they receive at (study institution) and what personal qualities have led them to be academically successful.

I am requesting your assistance in conducting this study at the institution. I am requesting your assistance in sending the below email script to all eligible students who meet the following inclusion criteria: (1) identify as Black or Hispanic and (2) have earned a minimum of 60 college credit hours. The participants will be asked to participate in one (1) 60-minute face-to-face interview at a time and location that is convenient for them.

I have attached the consent form that will be presented to participants that contains additional details of the study. The consent form will need to be sent with the email to potential student participants. To thank students for their time, each participant will be entered in a drawing to win a \$25 Walmart gift card.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at wendy.yoder@ttu.edu or (580) 774-6037, or Dr. Stephanie J. Jones who is supervising this research at stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu.

I truly appreciate your assistance with the conduction of my study, as well as identifying potential participants.

Sincerely,

Wendy Yoder,
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Texas Tech University

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment Email

Dear (study institution) Student:

My name is Wendy Yoder and I am currently a doctoral candidate at Texas Tech University in the higher education program. I am conducting a study that explores the perceptions and experiences of students who belong to a racial minority group and attend a predominantly White institution. Of specific interest is how students perceive the faculty academic advising they receive at (study institution) and what personal qualities have led them to be academically successful.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please let me know by responding to this email with your preferred method of contact. Once you have expressed your willingness to participate, I will contact you through your preferred communication method to schedule a 60-minute interview. I can be reached at wendy.yoder@ttu.edu or (580) 774-6037.

To thank you for your time, each participant will be entered in a drawing to win a \$25 Walmart gift card.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration in participating in this study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Wendy Yoder
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Texas Tech University

Appendix E

Informed Consent

Please share your thoughts in our research project.

What is this project studying?

The study is called “Faculty Advising to Support the Academic Persistence of Students of Color at One Predominantly White Institution.” This study will help us explore how students of color perceive and experience faculty academic advising at one Predominantly White Institution (PWI).

What would I do if I participate?

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview at a time and location that is convenient for you. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission. You will be asked a series of questions about your perceptions and experiences. You may also be asked to review your interview transcript once completed to ensure it accurately represents your thoughts.

How will I benefit from participating?

Besides providing the project with valuable information, you will be entered into a random drawing for a \$25 gift card from Walmart.

Can I quit if I become uncomfortable?

Yes, absolutely. Your participation is completely voluntary. The researchers and the Institutional Review Board have reviewed the questions and think you can answer them comfortably. You may skip any question you do not feel comfortable answering. You can also stop answering questions at any time. You are free to leave any time you wish. You can keep all the benefits of participating even if you stop. Participating is your choice. However, we do appreciate any help you are able to provide.

If you do become uncomfortable as a result of the discussed subject matter, Counseling services are available for all students free of charge. You may schedule an appointment by calling (580) 774-3776 or by visiting the Wellness Center, office 162.

How long will participation take?

We are asking for approximately 60 minutes of your time.

How are you protecting privacy?

Pseudonyms will be used to identify participants and the college in the study. None of your personal identifying information will be associated with any data collected. No one other than the researchers associated with this project will have access to the raw data. All related documentation will be stored either in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office or on a password protected computer.

I have some questions about this study. Who can I ask?

1. If you have questions about this study, please contact Wendy Yoder at wendy.yoder@ttu.edu or by phone at (580) 774-6037.
2. You may also contact Dr. Stephanie J. Jones, who is supervising this study, by email at Stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu or by phone at (806) 834-1380.
3. TTU also has a Board that protects the rights of people who participate in research. You can call to ask them questions at 806-742-2064. You can mail your questions to the Human Research Protection Program, Office of the Vice President for Research, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409, or you can email your questions to hrpp@ttu.edu.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

This consent form is not valid after June 18, 2019.

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

Interview Date: _____

Interview Time: _____

Interview Location: _____

Interviewer: Wendy Yoder

Interviewee: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and answer my questions. The purpose of the study is to explore how students of color perceive and experience faculty academic advising at the study institution. I will be interviewing several students of color on this campus to gather their perceptions of the advising experiences they have received while at the university.

With your permission, I will record the session and take notes to ensure that my records of your responses are accurate and complete. After the interview, I will transcribe our discussion and send you the transcription to review before submission. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity and your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to skip questions or stop the interview at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin? I will begin the recording now.

Interview Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. What would you describe as your race or ethnicity?
3. How long have you been at (the study institution)?
4. Describe your academic performance before college.
5. What is the highest level of education that each of your parents received?
6. What personal characteristics do you perceive to have helped you continue college from one year to the next?
7. Why did you decide to attend (the study institution)?
8. How does (the study institution) compare to your high school with regard to the number of students from racial minorities?
9. What thoughts did you have about attending a regional university with mostly White students?
10. How would you describe your experiences as a student of color in a college with mostly White students?
11. How would you describe your relationship with your faculty academic advisor?
12. What were your initial impressions of your faculty academic advisor?

13. Have you had your faculty academic advisor as an instructor in class?
14. How much of your personal experiences do you share with your faculty academic advisor?
15. What is your faculty academic advisor's race/ethnicity?
16. How does that affect your relationship with them, if at all?
17. Do you meet with your assigned faculty academic advisor or a different institutional representative? If someone else, why is that?
18. Whom do you see as a mentor at (the study institution)?
19. How does your academic advisor affect whether or not you continue at (the study institution)?
20. How do you perceive the academic support you receive from your faculty academic advisor?
21. How do you perceive your faculty academic advisor supports you in ways other than academically?
22. What plans do you have after college?
23. How did you decide on those plans?
24. How much of your plans after college have you discussed with your faculty academic advisor?
25. How do you think academic advisors can support students of color at (the study institution)?
26. What would you suggest faculty academic advisors do to build a positive relationship with their advisees?
27. What else do you suggest (the study institution) can do to support the academic persistence of students of color?